Snake-Charmer

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Snake-Charmer

by Hangsaman

Summary

Teenage Will Graham (19 y.o.) works in a restaurant which happens to be owned by Hannibal's close friend.
One day Hannibal decides to visit, where there is a sudden commotion. Turns out Will is injured with a burn and Hannibal, being a doctor once, is asked to help.

Hannibal convinces the reluctant Will to drive him to the hospital, after which Hannibal offers his psychiatric services, undeniably enchanted with the youth.

Through Will's therapy sessions, he slowly learns to trust the kind Hannibal, and grows attached, revealing his dark past to Hannibal bit by bit.

Then, Hannibal offers Will to take his therapy to the next level. By fighting back his past.

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

> Teenaged Will has longish hair. He also always looks like he's in a bad mood (Hannibal can't resist it).
> I got the inspiration from when Hugh Dancy played Michael Woodley in Kavanagh QC. Please google! :)
>
> Hannibal is in his mid-40s like in the show.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was rare for Hannibal to savour food that hadn't been crafted by his own hands.

But today, he had made the decision to visit his close friend Simon's luxurious restaurant for a change, and he was finding the food exceptional, so far.

Simon seemed busy; she was running around, serving her guests wine, and had barely any time to catch up with Hannibal. It was a Friday night, after all. No one was to blame.

Hannibal had just bitten into his fig tart, which was glazed in honey, and sitting atop a mixture of cheese and yoghurt flavoured frosting. A peculiar combination, yet the contrasts made it tastier—when Simon arrived with an intimidating wine bottle in hand, eager for Hannibal to taste her latest find.

"Hannibal," she said, smiling. Simon—Simonetta, actually. Hannibal had first met her in the Uffizi Gallery, her eyes frozen on the woman in the centre of a painting, who strongly resembled the viewer herself. Hannibal had mused upon her name—Simonetta. Surely with that name, she had been cursed to live up to it. But then she had insisted on being called Simon instead a little over a decade ago. Had chopped off her golden curls and ditched the clothing that she had been expected to don for society. As if to reclaim her own identity. Hannibal hadn't questioned her. He wanted her to be her true self.

Though art had brought them together, their love for the culinary arts had been the main reason that they had remained friends throughout the years.

Hannibal made as if to stand to shake his friend's hand properly but Simon pushed him down gently with a hand on the shoulder.

"Dorona di Venezia," said Simon, a warm, anticipatory smile on her face. Over the years Simon and Hannibal had started presenting each other with Italian wines. Hannibal raised his chin in acknowledgment and replied: "The golden grape."

Simon raised her brows in surprise, smiling like she knew that Hannibal would know the wine. “Only you would know. Therefore only you may taste.” Simon whispered, and poured the rich, golden liquid into a fresh wine glass, handing it to Hannibal to take in its aroma. Hannibal closed his eyes, bathing in the fragrance; picturing pears, apricots…and, sea breeze. He opened his eyes in gratitude. “A bold choice,” said Hannibal. “I’m impressed. Pairs well with the figs. Simply…exquisite,”

“I thought of you when I acquired it,” replied Simon, beaming.

“I’m honoured,” said Hannibal. “We shall see what I come up with next—”

Suddenly, there was a loud crash from the kitchen, startling and silencing all the guests. It was a moment before Simon composed her face. “Excuse me, Hannibal.” she said, and went to address the guests.

Hannibal wasn’t annoyed. If their conversation was cut short by an accident, then it wasn’t anyone’s fault. He continued with his dessert and tasted the wine.

Simon came back with a neutral expression on her face, but Hannibal could see that there was something wrong. “I apologise for the commotion. Everything is fine.” She told the guests, who had already moved past the incident and were feasting as if nothing had happened.

“What’s the matter?” Hannibal asked, when Simon arrived at his table.

Simon took a breath and began: “Hannibal…one of our cooks has burned himself and won’t let us see the wound. I’m afraid it might be serious but he’s absolutely refusing,”

Hannibal looked back Simon, already knowing where this was going.

“You were a doctor once…maybe you can help us make him go to the hospital?”

“Of course,” Hannibal replied, immediately standing up.

“He’s only a recent addition to our kitchen,” Simon explained, as they walked. “He turned up really destitute and I couldn’t help but take pity on him. Fortunately he proved himself to be a decent cook.”

Hannibal was led discreetly to the kitchen, where the staff gawked at him. They looked scared: Hannibal was the face of who they served. The upper-classes, the rich people with the expensive suits; the people who had jobs that made more money than the staff would ever get to see in their lifetime.

“Where is he?” asked Simon. With her, though, the staff seemed to be at ease.

“He’s shut himself up downstairs in the wine cellar,” said a man who seemed to be the Head-chef.

“Show me,” said Hannibal, following Simon.

When they arrived at the head of the stairs, Hannibal held a hand up to Simon. “It’s better I go alone.”

Simon nodded, and offered a smile as if consolation. “Thank you, Hannibal. Truly.”

Hannibal nodded, taking steps loud enough so that the boy knew he was coming down, and won’t be startled. He stopped at the entrance to the cellar. It was chilly, and loudly silent. Perhaps the boy had ran away. But then, Hannibal heard small sound, reminiscent of a mewling—a wounded animal. As if the boy was crying.

“Hello,” echoed Hannibal. “I’m here to help.” He entered, looking around but seeing no one. Hannibal walked around calmly, slightly mesmerised by all the endless wine bottles, some gathering dust.

Then there he was: crouching in a corner, shaking as if someone had come to arrest him. A scrawny youth: barely an adult. He had a dripping cloth filled with ice pressed up against the wound. The boy looked up at Hannibal with blood-shot eyes, his curly shoulder-length hair obscuring most of his face. But Hannibal didn’t need to look at all of his face to conclude that he was beautiful, so much so that the first thing that came to Hannibal’s mind was not immediate concern for his injury, but that he wanted to sketch the boy. His eyes looked dark in the dull light of the cellar: it was probably a colour that came alive in the sunshine. A mix of greens and blues that also bordered on hazel and grey. A difficult colour to capture in paint, one that required many layers. His cheekbones were jutting out, hollowing out his face; his brows furrowed in helplessness. The burn was hurting him: that much was apparent.

Hannibal approached the boy slowly and crouched, so that he was at eye-level with the boy. “I’m Hannibal. Simon’s friend.”

The boy looked back in a grimace, because that was all he could do to make the pain bearable. “Don’t,” he whispered in a hoarse voice. “Please, stay away,”

Hannibal was taken aback. Slightly rude, yet, what a fascinating creature. “I’m a doctor,” Hannibal lied. “I’d like to help you. Will you let me see the burn?”

Hannibal didn’t reach out, but instead waited until the boy responded, or to hold out his arm. A few moments passed in which Hannibal could see the boy thinking, trying to weigh out what to do. His squinted eyes roamed around at the floor instead of at Hannibal.

“May I ask your name?” Hannibal tried instead.

The boy shuddered in pain, and them mumbled out: “Will.”

“Will.” Hannibal echoed back, undeniably enchanted. “Simon says you’re a hard worker,”

Will frowned even more and snapped back: “Don’t need you to shower me with praise to get me to trust you.”

Hannibal smiled, despite himself. This boy was clever. What was he doing working in a kitchen?

“Trust should be gained by far more meaningful acts,” Hannibal replied. “I’m not asking you to trust me. I’m asking you to let me help you, and then we never have to see each other again.” In truth, Hannibal had no intention of letting Will out of his sight, but he did what he had to do.

Will shifted around his weight. “But then I’d owe you…” his jaw moved as if to stifle a sob.

“I promise you nothing of the sort is going to happen,” Hannibal said.

“Promises mean nothing,” the boy replied, bitterly. What could have ever happened to him that he was so angry?

“I always keep my promises,” Hannibal said. He stooped down further to meet Will’s eyes. Will did lift them, if only for a second. They were even more enchanting when looked at directly. “Please.” Hannibal said, and waited.

Finally, Will lifted his hand that was hiding the wound and held his arm out to Hannibal. “You’ll assume that I did it to myself,” he said in a voice that was so defeated that it pulled at Hannibal’s heart. “That’s why I didn’t want to go the hospital. They won’t believe that it was an accident. I can’t afford psychiatric help,”

It was true: not only was there a burn on Will’s arm, there were also obvious self-inflicted cuts. Countless of them: some thin and white, old scars. Others thick and gaping and pinkish, only recently healed. Scratched at wildly because healing brought on a merciless itch. Here and there, band-aids that probably covered cuts that had been made in the past five days, and were still healing. This was why Will didn’t want to show Simon his arm.

Hannibal stifled a sigh. “It’s a third degree burn. We need to go to the hospital,”

Will pulled his arm away, displeased. “I…think I’ll be okay,” he said, though his jaw was shut tight in pain.

“Will, I’ll talk to the doctor and will answer him however you want me to answer him,”

“If you’re a doctor, can’t you just treat me instead?” Will asked.

“I do not have the supplies for your treatment at hand.” Hannibal replied. “I’ll take you to a doctor I know. Nothing will happen that you don’t want to happen. I’ll make sure you’re taken care of, and comfortable.”

“You promise?” Will asked, timidly.

“I promise.”

Will considered a moment, and then finally nodded.

*

Hannibal told one of the waiters to pass on the message to Simon that he was taking Will to the hospital, and that he would call her after-hours. Will led the way to the backdoor and they

slipped away, until Hannibal led them to his car. Hannibal didn't force any conversation with Will throughout the ride; only glancing now and then his way to make sure Will was feeling alright. The boy was looking out the window, lost in his own world.

Will tensed when they arrived. He looked like he was going to be sick, by the pale colour of his face.

"Alright, Will?" asked Hannibal. He would've preferred to give him an encouraging touch, but it wasn't wise to do so. At least, not yet.

Will looked at the entrance to the emergency room, contemplating. Then, he asked: "You'll be there with me, right?" He looked at his hands, face sullen, as if expecting to get rejected.

Fortunately, Hannibal knew how to answer these sort of questions. He said exactly what Will wanted to hear: "I won't leave you, no."

Will jerked his face away to look at the street again, concealing welled up tears.

"I'll be right by your side. Come," said Hannibal, getting out of the car, to save Will further humiliation, and to make time for Will to compose his tear-stained face.

*

The ER doctor recognised Hannibal, and patiently listened to the instructions on how Will was to be treated. No questions about the scars and cuts, no questions about psychiatric help. No mention of payment, because Hannibal was going to settle that. No prying for information if the boy didn't want to answer. The doctor nodded, and began his work.

*

Hannibal sat beside Will as they waited for his IV to drip. Hannibal was satisfied with how the doctor had followed his instructions. Safe to say that he wasn't going to be eaten any time soon.

Will had received pain medication, along with antibiotics and ointments for later use. Hannibal observed how the boy was fighting the urge to fall asleep: this was a boy who always had to have his guard up.

"Why are you helping me?" Will asked, suddenly. He didn't look at Hannibal, and that was alright. Hannibal knew that it was going to take time for Will to get used to eye-contact.

"There shouldn't always be the need for a reason to help someone."

Will looked taken aback. Genuinely puzzled. He remained quiet for a while. But then he spoke again: "There must be something that you want from me,"

"Do you usually find that to be true?"

Silence, and then: "Yeah," Will replied, picking at his hands, which were pale and devoid of any scars. Will knew where to cut; knew how to hide, and suffer in silence.

“What if that wasn’t true with me?” Hannibal prompted.

“You’re right. What would you want to do with a low-life like me?” Will scoffed.

Hannibal was distraught, at how such a beautiful boy such as Will viewed himself. “If I thought that you were a low-life, then why would I be here? If my only reason to help was because I couldn’t say no to Simon, then I wouldn’t be here anymore, sitting with you, waiting until you’re done. I would’ve walked out after I dropped you off at the entrance, no?”

Will was biting his lip now. When he spoke his voice was so tiny that it was heartbreaking to hear. “I’m sorry.” he said. Tears were welling up in his eyes; he turned his face away. “I didn’t mean to…”

Maybe Hannibal had been too harsh. He took out his pocket-square and offered it to Will. He would’ve preferred to wipe those precious tears himself, but something about Will made it apparent that he wouldn’t want to be touched like that. “Do not be sorry,” Hannibal said.

“Thank you.” Will mumbled, swiping at his eyes.

“You’re welcome, Will.” answered Hannibal.

*

A nurse arrived to take out the IV. Will was compliant, but nevertheless he returned to his nervous self once it was time to leave. “Where do I pay?” he asked the nurse. She looked at Hannibal, then smiled warmly at Will. “It’s taken care of. You can leave.”

“What—” Will began, but it was quite apparent that he was tired, and finding it difficult to stay rebellious.

“Don’t worry, Will. Please.” Hannibal reassured him. He began walking so that he could drive Will to his home, wherever that was.

“But I must pay you back—” How stubborn, Hannibal mused. The exit doors slid open, blasting in the cold air of the night.

“Pay me back by promising me that you’ll take your medication,” Hannibal said. “And to let me redress the wound when the time comes.”

“But that doesn’t make sense…” Will stopped walking, wind blowing away at his hair. Hannibal looked back and restrained himself from stopping and observing Will’s beauty. He kept walking, until he looked back again and saw that Will was not following him, but had stopped to light a cigarette. If there was one thing Hannibal hated more than rude people, it was cigarettes. He walked back to Will and observed as the boy struggled to light his battered cigarette in the wind. It was ridiculous. Hannibal shot out a hand and snatched the cigarette away, crumbling it until it was unsalvageable. He was ready for whatever anger Will would spew on him.

“Hey! That was my last!”

“Certainly it should be your last,” Hannibal said. “A cook, who smokes. Unacceptable.”

Will looked away. He knew that Hannibal was right. Hannibal could see that Will was fighting the urge to roll his eyes. How sweet, and considerate. He didn’t want to be disrespectful towards Hannibal. Not anymore. “You can pay me back by quitting the cigarettes,”

Will looked back at Hannibal. He looked like he was trying to work out the logistics. If Hannibal were to dress his wounds, and see him through to the end of his battle with smoking, then that meant that he was going to see Hannibal again. Hannibal couldn’t tell if Will wanted to see him again.

“Sounds like manipulation.” Will replied, in a low voice. “How did you manage to get the doctor to not force me into getting psychiatric help?”

“Will, it’s late. Let me drop you home. You need rest.”

“No—tell me. Or else.” Hannibal was taken aback. Now Will was the one who was trying to manipulate him.

“Or else, what, Will?”

Will stilled a moment. He hadn’t thought it through. He gulped and then answered: “Or else…I won’t take my meds.”

“You would hurt yourself just to gain information?”

“Hurting my self isn’t something new to me,” he said it with such determination that Hannibal felt his heart drop.

“Infections are painful…and can lead to death.” Hannibal tried. He forgot why they were still out here in the parking lot; in the cold.

“Don’t have much to live for, anyway.” This time, Will’s eyes stayed on Hannibal’s, as if daring Hannibal to think up a suitable answer to that.

Hannibal walked closer to Will, wanting to pull the boy in an embrace. Wanting to protect him. But he couldn’t help if the boy didn’t allow himself to be helped. “Will,” he began. “I was able to ward off the doctor because I told him I was going to be your psychiatrist from now on.”

Will frowned in puzzlement. “Psychiatrist? Aren’t you like a medical doctor?”

“I am a psychiatrist now, but I used to be a doctor. In fact I used to work in the ER too.” Hannibal said. “Will you come see me for therapy?”

Will bowed his head, obscuring his eyes. “I don’t need therapy. Besides, I told you I can’t afford it.” His lips were trembling, as if being offered help was too much to process.

“I meant free of charge,” said Hannibal. “You only have to let me help you. You need only to ask, Will.”

Will was thinking, probably trying to work out the pros and cons. He looked like he was going to have a panic-attack. “Or, Will,” continued Hannibal. “Think about it and let me know the answer when we meet next to redress your burn. Does that sound alright?”

Will lifted his head and looked at Hannibal, tears welling again, and nodded.

*

Will was half-asleep in the passenger seat, trying very hard to stay awake. Hannibal could see from the corner of his eye that he was pinching himself in the wrist to stay awake. Sometimes for a few seconds, his breathing would change, indicating that he had given in, only to jerk awake again. But in the end he could fight it no longer, and slumped against the door. Hannibal was content enough, because it gave him the opportunity to observe the boy, in all his angelic beauty.

Will lived in a shady part of the city, one where Hannibal would prefer not to tread. He would stand out like an easy target, though he wasn’t as easy to take down.

When they arrived, Hannibal got out quietly and looked at Will’s angelic face, asleep. He sighed as he stifled the urge to caress the skin, pale in the moonlight. He opened the door and stepped away to seem less threatening.

“Will,” He called, taking care not to touch him. He would only be startled. “Will?”

Will woke up, and looked at Hannibal in disbelief that he had fallen asleep. He composed himself quickly and got out of the car, looking down at the pavement as if lost for words. “Um…” he began.

Hannibal handed Will his paper bag of medications. “I’ve put my card in there. Be sure to call me in two days.” Hannibal had also slipped in some cash, but Will would only find that out later.

Will received the bag and looked up with wounded eyes. “Uh…thank you. For everything.”

“Take care, Will.” Hannibal said. “Think about what I said. Even if you don’t want therapy, we still need to clean your wound. Alright?”

Will nodded, and then stepped away to let Hannibal pass.

As Hannibal drove away, he saw Will still standing on the side-walk, looking helpless, like a lost puppy in the rain.

Chapter End Notes

I want to normalise lesbians so I made an original character called Simon, who, as you may have guessed, resembles the woman in Botticelli paintings (Simonetta Vespucci). She's a girlboss but also is very kind.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

> Will goes to Hannibal to get his wound rewrapped, after which Hannibal cooks him dinner.
> Will lets out a few truths about himself and attempts to back-track; Hannibal is eager for more but patient.

The two days that followed, Hannibal found himself almost restless. He really shouldn't have been so worried: if Will wasn't going to call, all Hannibal had to do was call Simon and ask her how Will was doing.

He hadn't felt this way in years, he reflected. How strange, that we tremble in the face of beauty. But of course, it wasn't just beauty. It was something else too, something buried underneath this boy's skin, trembling and fighting to be let out.

Hannibal twirled a pencil in his hand and hovered it over creamy paper, trying to bring out Will's face from memory. It took a few tries to get the lines of the proportions ready—yet, he knew that he needed to spend more time with Will to be able to draw him from memory alone. What an experience it would be, if Will had suddenly decided to leave Baltimore, and Hannibal was never to see him again? Hannibal wondered what he would do; how far, and if, he would seek out Will.

Suddenly, his office phone rang. Undeniably, Hannibal felt his heart leap. Will.

He picked up the phone and checked the unknown number. He smiled. "Hello?"

"Uh…hi," came the answer. Hannibal closed his eyes for a moment, glad to hear the boy's voice, shaky though it was.

"Will." Hannibal replied, taking care to sound professional. "I'm glad you called."

"Uh…yeah, um. About the burn…when can we meet? And where?"

"I'll be happy to welcome you into my office, Will. But if you're more comfortable to meet in a public setting, then I can pick you up." Hannibal said. Was this going too far? Hannibal wondered.

"Uh…I think I'll make it, I have the address from your card," Will replied.

"Very well then. Are you free this evening? Perhaps 6pm, and then I can make you dinner."

There was a stretch of silence, as if Will was unsure of what that meant. “Yeah, okay. See you.”

“See you soon, Will.” Hannibal put the phone down, unable to keep from smiling.

*

“Hey,” Will said as Hannibal opened the door. He didn’t know what else to say. Seeing Hannibal again made him nervous, because he knew now who he stood in front of. A simple google search had provided sufficient information for Will to know that he really *was* beneath this man, in terms of class. He cringed to think how crass he had been around Hannibal the last time.

“Will,” smiled Hannibal, holding out the door. The strange thing was that he genuinely seemed glad to see Will. Strange too, how Will was always able to work out what others intended towards him, but with Hannibal, it was impossible. It was more the urge to figure out what Hannibal wanted from Will, more than anything that he found himself willing to meet Hannibal again. And, perhaps the fact that he found himself thinking of Hannibal often. For the second time in his life, he entertained the idea that there might be someone, after all, who could understand him. Though, the last time he had let someone in, it hadn’t gone too well. He had to be careful around Hannibal, because deep down, Will blamed himself for what had happened. He had even thought of arming himself with a knife—but then remembered that if Hannibal was someone who was actually going to kill him, he didn’t care much. He’d rather be dead anyway. That way he wouldn’t have to think the thoughts that he did; dream the dreams that he did.

“Thanks for having me…” Will murmured. “…Dr. Lecter.”

Hannibal smiled, a certain concentrated expression on his face. “I see you haven’t quit smoking,” he pointed out.

Will gasped internally. He had had only one cigarette that day, and had scrubbed himself raw in the shower in hopes of not getting caught. Hannibal wasn’t to be deceived so easily, then. “I…I’m trying,” he replied, sheepishly.

Hannibal smiled as if in forgiveness, walked ahead and guided Will into his office, which was overwhelming to say the least. Again, he thought of how strange Hannibal was, to let a boy like Will into the presence of his worldly possessions. Possessions which could be stolen, if Will was the type to steal. He tried not to gawk at the books, the ladder that led up to it, the art on the walls. It was almost too much to take in all at once.

Hannibal motioned for Will to sit on the teal-coloured sofa by the wall, a medical bag already waiting for him.

“How’s the pain?” Hannibal asked, bringing a glass of water for Will.

“Thank you, it’s…bearable.” He took a sip and found himself handing the glass back to Hannibal, somehow their movements smooth, as if they had known each other for a long time. Hannibal placed the glass on a nearby table and sat down next to Will.

“Show me.” Hannibal said, extending his hands, palms up.

The sleeve of his hoodie was tight—there was no way he could pull it over the bunchy gauze covering his burn, so Will lifted up his hoodie, clad only in a simple white T-shirt with half-sleeves. Somehow, miraculously, he didn’t feel as if his self-harm was anything to hide from Hannibal, or to be nervous about. Hannibal inched closer and brought his hands—clad in latex gloves now—over the gauze, and began unwrapping it. Once the whole strip was off, Hannibal expected the process closely. “It’s healing fine.” he said. He didn’t point out that it was going to scar, because he knew that Will was clever—and experienced with wounds—enough to know that.

In order for the silence to not grow too loud, Will spoke: “I…apologise for my behaviour the other day,” he lifted his eyes for a second and then looked away. “I was…very rude.”

Hannibal smiled in appreciation, impressed at the boy. “You were under stress. Do not worry.”

Will nodded, actually surprised at being forgiven so easily. Things weren’t like this back in Louisiana. There were always punishments; always consequences.

“Tell me, Will,” said Hannibal. “Why do you work for Simon? You seem far too young to be working full-time.”

Will paused as if in shock. He gulped, suddenly nervous. “Um…has my therapy already started?” he joked.

Hannibal only smiled. “You could say that. Or you could pretend that we are simply having conversation.”

Will nodded. He considered lying. “Do you want me to be honest?”

Hannibal nodded. “One should always try to be honest.” His hands were gently applying ointment on the burn. Will observed Hannibal’s hands, and wondered if they were capable of violence. Most men were: why was Will pretending that Hannibal could be the exception?

“Well…the thing is that…I have to save up for college first. As for Simon—you may think I’m crazy.” Will gulped, questioning if Hannibal would decide to throw him out if he told the truth. Maybe that would be the better ending to their brief relation. “I…was practically homeless and followed her. Found out that she had a fancy restaurant—observed her, the people around her—then begged her for a job knowing she would take pity on me. I knew that she wouldn’t turn me down.” Will looked up, ready to see that Hannibal would have a sour look on his face. But Hannibal was smiling. Smirking, even.

“You noticed that she has a soft spot for certain types of people, in terms of staff.” Simon had always been this way—treating people like relatives; taking youths under her wing. Just because she knew what rejection felt like because she didn’t dress or talk like a *lady.*

“Exactly.”

“And you figured that the pay would be better too.”

“Yes.” Will replied, expecting—however absurd it seemed—to be slapped. “Aren’t you repulsed?”

Hannibal tilted his head in puzzlement, a smile playing at his shapely lips. “Because you knew how to work the world in your favour? No.”

“But isn’t that…manipulative? I practically stalked her. She’s your friend!” Who was he trying to convince, Will wondered. He looked down at his arm, wrapped and fresh again. “Thank you.” he said.

“You’re welcome, Will.” he took Will’s other arm and regarded the scars. Will didn’t feel offended, or annoyed. He had actually cut himself the day after he met Hannibal, as a way to justify his weakness. How he had made himself vulnerable to a powerful man. There were fresh band-aids plastered here and there that Hannibal’s eyes were travelling over, as if in amazement. Instead of commenting on them, or asking about them, he said: “Shall we move on to the kitchen? You must be hungry.”

*

Will stood around the kitchen counter, mesmerised by his surroundings. He had gotten a taste of what went behind ‘fine dining’—as they say—but it mesmerised him even more that a man who was supposedly so qualified, and kind…and…handsome, could also cook so finely.

“May I help with something?” Will asked, timidly. He suspected Hannibal was going to deny him handling a knife, but Hannibal only smiled, as if happy for the help. “Of course,” he said. “Can you make a salad?”

Will chuckled, and caught himself. When was the last time someone had made him laugh? He composed his face and began washing his hands. “Is that supposed to be sarcastic?” he replied.

“Let’s see how well Simon has trained you.” Hannibal said, and handed Will a knife.

Will surveyed the vegetables laid out on the counter, and began with the greens. “How long have you known Simon? If…you don’t mind me asking…” Will said.

“Are we doing a quid pro quo?” Hannibal had taken out a container from the fridge, and was inspecting the contents in it—some meat which had been soaking in milk, from the looks of it.

Will gulped. “I—I didn’t mean to pry, I was just—”

“Will—it’s alright.” Hannibal said. “I have known her since we were young, back in Florence, where we met.”

Will rested his knife, astonished. Really, the surprises were never-ending. Also, did that mean that they had been romantically involved at some point? He knew Simon had a wife—who came by sometimes and was adorably shy around the staff. But what about before? He tried

hard to imagine Hannibal being romantically involved with someone—woman or man, and found it impossible. Hannibal somehow seemed above that sort of thing.

“Florence…” Will said, not realising he was thinking out loud.

“Tell me, Will, what did you mean by being ‘practically homeless’?” Hannibal’s hands were squeezing a lemon now, his face in utter concentration.

Will paused his chopping again. Had he admitted that so easily?

“Nothing…” he replied, the familiar unease of having had revealed too much of himself to a stranger returning. He could feel Hannibal looking at him; regarding him closely, trying to read his face. Will kept his head down. Surprisingly, Hannibal didn’t push.
Instead he seemed to notice that Will needed space and allowed Will to go to the dining room to set the table for the two of them.

*

Hannibal drizzled marmalade glaze onto their liver slices. A delicious aroma of smoked paprika wafted off the meat. Will caught himself feeling ravenous. Strange, since he had lost all appetite for food this past year. Usually when he cooked at the restaurant and tasted meals to check if they tasted right, that alone seemed to keep him filled up. He rarely had two meals a day—once was enough, and it was more so that he could keep his body going.

Hannibal sat himself down, lifted his glass of wine and took in the aroma, his eyes closing briefly. Will observed how prominent Hannibal’s bone structure was; he marvelled at it until he remembered to look away.

“Can I have a sip?” Will asked, suddenly finding himself eager with wanting to test Hannibal.

Hannibal put down his glass of wine and regarded Will, as if he saw through him. “No.” he answered, simply.

Will was taken aback; he feigned annoyance. “Simon lets me,” he tried; mirroring Hannibal by picking up his fork and knife.

“Not surprising,” Hannibal replied. “We all start young in Europe.”

“I asked her to let me bartend but that was crossing a line.” Will said, taking his first bite. “Mmm,” he heard himself say. “This is delicious.”

Hannibal smiled, gazing at Will. “I hope by letting you sip, you mean she’s trying to show you the varieties and complexities of wines, and not simply letting you drink?” Hannibal asked. This was the first time he felt any sense of disapproval towards her.

“Of course.” Will replied. “My first wine tasting with her didn’t go so well though—I downed it like a shot.” Will said casually, munching on his asparagus.

Hannibal smiled, more than Will had ever seen before. “She must have been shocked,”

“The look of horror on her face! And when it came to cooking, I had to admit to her that I had never boiled an egg before. She asked me how in the world did my mother never teach me,” Will said. Suddenly, his smile dropped. He was getting too comfortable with Hannibal. He tried to change the subject. “Europe, you said. And you’re from?”

But Hannibal wasn’t to be fooled. He knew what was happening, and what Will was trying to avoid. But it wasn’t wise yet, to prod Will about his family so soon. “You’ve come a long way, then.” he commented. “You know how to finely chop vegetables,” He smiled, trying to bring Will back into an easier atmosphere.

“Thanks,” Will stuttered.

“Hasn’t it occurred to you that the wines will taste better if you quit smoking?”

Will smiled, grateful for the mercy that Hannibal was showing him. “Of course it has, but… easier said than done,” he said, flashing a mischievous smile to Hannibal. “I did only smoke one today, though.”

Hannibal tilted his head, smiling in spite of himself. “I’m proud of you,” he said, matter-of-factly.

The remark had more impact than Will let himself show. He looked down into his plate, trying to push away the foreign feeling of making someone proud. He felt his heart drop with memories of the past; his past in which he had never made anyone proud. “Thanks,” he muttered.

The rest of the meal was spent pleasantly enough, with talks of anything but themselves. Will knew that he was avoiding what was inevitable: eventually he would breakdown and spill himself to Hannibal. And, he reflected, maybe that was okay. He didn’t particularly care what happened to him anymore.

*

Will stood with hands deep in his kangaroo pocket, nervous. He held out the wad of cash that Hannibal had slipped into his bag of medications. “I…you’ve done enough for me. I can’t possibly accept this.” he said.

Hannibal looked disappointed. “I was hoping you would use it for your needs, seeing as you’ve injured yourself.” Hannibal tried.

Will looked down. He always made ends meet, but there was no denying that he was broke.

“Please.” Hannibal said, smiling warmly. “Let us pretend this conversation never took place.”

Will nodded, thankful, but realising that now, he truly was in Hannibal’s debt. “Thank you… Dr. Lecter.” Will choked out. He was starting to cry again. What a mess.

“Will?” Hannibal said, drawing closer, his hand hovering near Will’s shoulder as if asking for permission to touch. Surely the shoulder was a safe place to touch? It was a gesture of loyalty; of unconditional support between friends, even family.

Will noticed, and against his better judgement, let himself be touched. He felt himself leaning into Hannibal's touch. "Sorry for crying all the time…what a sissy," he said, half-laughing.

"Crying is a human emotion like any other, Will. It doesn't make you any less than others,"

Will gulped, finding himself suddenly eager to spill something of himself. "I used to be punished for crying…" he said, bowing his face so that his hair hid his eyes.

"Punished by…your parents?" Hannibal asked, softly. "If, you are comfortable to tell me."

Will considered for a moment. Did he really want to reveal himself to Hannibal? "Uh—maybe another time," he said, disappointed in himself. Hannibal retrieved his hand; Will felt himself oddly sad at that.

Hannibal looked strange, but not offended. "You drop morsels of alarming information just to not explain yourself after. Is this a tactic to scare me away? To frighten me so that I never let you in this house again?"

Will was speechless. He looked back at Hannibal with guilty eyes. He didn't even know why he was here, or saying things that he hadn't planned on saying.

"Will," said Hannibal, before Will could say something even more damning. "I hope we can talk about this in our next session. Can I expect you again?"

"Yes," Will replied, even though he didn't really know what he wanted. But he did want to figure it out; figure *Hannibal* out. And that he could only do by interacting with and observing Hannibal himself.

*

Will ascended the littered stairs to his one-bedroom apartment. It wasn't even an apartment, more like a shoe-box that someone had discarded. Simon had given him five days off to recuperate, and the truth was that Will could go see Hannibal everyday if he wanted to until his small holiday ended. He really had nothing to do except for lazying around in bed, thinking thoughts that left him trembling and unable to move. Since he had acquired this place, that was all he seemed to do. Whereupon back in Louisiana he had spent most of his time outdoors, dirtying his hands, breathing in the forest air; sometimes even reading out in the open, turning pages with his muddied hands. It was also to escape being at home—being under the suffocating tension of his father—but he had come to love nature, and the peace that it provided. Now, all the things that he used to be able to do seemed far away and out of reach. Work was bearable, because it kept him busy and away from thinking—and, cutting.

He thought of getting drunk: the temptation of forgetting himself dangled before his eyes. He had some extra cash, after all. But then he remembered what had happened to him the last time he had gotten drunk. The memory was so jarring that he ran to his bathroom, threw open the broken mirror, until he held fast to a razor blade. He took off his hoodie and looked at his arms. He was running out of space. Perhaps he could do his thighs instead. He pulled down his pants and sat on the cold toilet seat, and blade hovering over the skin.

And then, just as he was about to make the first cut, he saw Hannibal's face. Immediately, he dropped the blade and sat thinking. He imagined Hannibal walking up to him, looking at him with loving eyes. Slowly, he felt Hannibal's warm hand place itself on the top of Will's head, and then move to place itself under his chin, drawing his face up. His thumb caressing Will's jaw. Will sighed and felt an undeniable twitch in between his legs. It shocked him, but at the same time he had somehow known that this was going to happen. He cursed Hannibal for interfering with his life; he cursed himself for letting Hannibal in. He ran his hands through his hair in agitation, furious at his arousal, and then picked up the razor blade.

He had to stop thinking about Hannibal.

He took a breath and began cutting.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Will does something during his therapy session that makes sense in his head.

Two days later Will found himself waiting in Hannibal's waiting room, more nervous than ever before. He fidgeted with the strings of his hoodie; bit his nails, then shoved his hands under the sides of his thighs. He should've at least tried to dress better, he reflected. For Dr. Lecter. He knew he looked like shit: there were purple circles under his eyes. The night before he had chewed his lips bloody so that there was a scab on his lower lip. He was pale, he knew, and appeared malnourished. He could tell by how people winced at the sight of him. He was also long overdue for a haircut. But at least he had showered and scrubbed himself raw with boiling water to at least maintain a sense of cleanliness.

Suddenly, the door to Dr. Lecter's office opened. "Will," said Dr. Lecter. "Come in." Will observed Hannibal, immaculately dressed in a dashing navy suit. Why did he have to be so handsome? Will wondered, a little annoyed.

Will stood up shakily, feeling almost dizzy. "Hi, Dr. Lecter." he answered, walking through the door. He cleared his throat and then asked: "Could I have a glass of water, please?" the request was only a ruse, so that he could do what he wanted to do. Or thought he wanted to do.

"Certainly," answered Hannibal, disappearing for the moment.

Will then hurriedly pulled off his hoodie, threw off his sneakers and slid off his pants. The room wasn't cold, but he still felt a chill across his skin. The idea had come to him only the night before. Surely this was what Hannibal was after, he had reasoned. Fully naked—save for the gauze on his left forearm—Will sat back on the patient's leather chair, and drew up his knees to his chest. He looked straight ahead at where Hannibal was going to be sitting, facing him.

Hannibal returned with a glass of water in hand, his moving footsteps suddenly coming to a halt. Will didn't budge his eyes: he didn't want to see what Hannibal's face looked like, in case his first reaction had been disgust. After some excruciatingly long seconds, Hannibal resumed his steps and approached the glass table next to Will, calmly setting the glass of water down on a coaster. Then, he walked over to his psychiatrist's chair, unbuttoned his jacket gracefully, and sat down, crossing his legs. He slowly lifted his eyes to Will, strangely not betraying any emotion, expect for maybe a hint of curiosity.

"Do I have to explain myself?" Will asked in a low voice.

Hannibal raised his brows slightly. “It’s entirely up to you, Will. Remember, this is your therapy.”

Will frowned. “So…uh, you aren’t…mad at me?”

“No,”

“You aren’t disgusted?” Will tried.

“No,”

Hmm. “You’re not gonna throw me out?”

Hannibal’s lips twitched, as if in an almost-smile. He shook his head. “No, Will.”

Will thought a moment, the all-too-familiar feeling of shame slowly creeping up on him. He tilted his head down so that his hair obscured his eyes, which were rapidly turning misty. “I’m sorry,” he murmured, not even sure if Hannibal had heard him. He wiped his eyes with his bare wrists, gulping painfully to get the tears down.

“Will…” said Hannibal. Perhaps that was all he could say or do, seeing as Will was unclothed and acting completely inappropriate. Will took a deep breath and then stood up, not caring anymore. He wanted to prove to himself once and for all that this was exactly what Hannibal had wanted all along. He walked his bare feet soundlessly across the distance between them, until he was so close that he felt Hannibal’s wool trousers brush his bare knee. Hannibal leant back and uncrossed his legs, perhaps curious to see what Will would do next. His eyes lingered shamelessly over Will’s body: at his jutting hip-bones, his exposed scars and cuts, his weak wrists, the bandaged arm that had been the cause of how they had met. His thighs, covered in fresh band-aids. And, for the briefest of a moment, his genitals. Will felt a sinful thrill at being looked at, though it was more of an assessment of Will’s body than anything else. To soak up the sight of him, his youthful limbs and damaged skin. As if to take stock of what Hannibal was dealing with. Why was Hannibal not reacting? He wondered. Say something, he wanted to shout. But instead he lifted his legs and placed himself on Hannibal’s lap sideways, not knowing where the confidence had come from.

After a silent moment, he felt Hannibal’s strong arms cradle him like a mould. The words that had been on Will’s tongue just moments prior evaporated into the air. “It’s alright, Will.” Hannibal said against his ear. Will turned and raised his arms to lock them around Hannibal’s neck, so that his face was against Hannibal’s jaw. It felt better this way, without Hannibal’s eyes scrutinising his every movement.

“I’m ashamed of myself,” Will murmured. “I thought this was what you were after.”

Will felt Hannibal’s breath stop for a second; he remained silent. Perhaps that was admission alone, or not.

Then, Hannibal’s warm hand settled on his waist, against his cold, protruding ribs. Maybe Will could be forgiven for acting like such a child. “I’m sorry,” he said again.

“Will,” Hannibal finally replied. “Let me just hold you for now,”

Hannibal’s other hand stroked the back of Will’s head, a feeling so foreign but so deliciously soothing. He wondered if he could have experienced such a thing if his mother had been around for him when he had been a child. He felt his eyes growing misty again, and his lip tremble, for the child who had been so lonely, so starved of love. How strange to feel these things in the arms of a stranger.

Slowly, he closed his eyes and felt his limbs grow warmer from Hannibal’s body, his mind growing hazy. He didn’t fight the sleep that was taking over him; he realised that he trusted Hannibal enough to be unconscious. If he were to end up dead for being vulnerable again, then so be it. Repeating the mistake meant that it would be entirely his fault, and no one else was to be blamed for it but himself.

*

When Will woke again, he was wrapped in a warm blanket, his surroundings bathed in the dim orange light of a lamp. He sat up and saw that he was in a big, comfortable bed; the largeness of it sent a greedy thrill up his spine. These were the things of dreams. His clothes were neatly folded and set on a chair near to the door, which, thoughtfully, was left open just an inch, so as not to let Will think that he had been locked in an unfamiliar room. This was probably a guest room, thought Will, jumping up and dressing himself. He looked at the clock on the bed-side table and gasped: it was nearing midnight. He must have been asleep for at least 4 hours. And 4 hours of nightmare-less sleep was almost unheard of.

Will turned the lamp off, tried to tidy up the blanket, and then navigated his way out, finally finding the stairs that led downstairs to the familiar kitchen. But Hannibal wasn’t there.

But he was in his office, sitting close to the fire; reading.

“Dr. Lecter?” Will said as he entered, not sure if he was supposed to pretend that nothing had happened.

Hannibal turned his head and smiled, as he watched Will walk over to him. Will prepared to say goodbye when Hannibal spoke: “You must be hungry,” said Hannibal, setting aside his book. In truth, Will was used to hunger. But he wanted to stay, even if for a little longer.

“Come, you must eat.” said Hannibal.

*

Will had never been as thankful for a hot meal as he was now. He tried not to wolf down the chicken soup and give his urgency away. It was filled to the brim with vegetables of all sorts: as if for the sake of Will’s nourishment. Hannibal watched—with a proud smile that wasn’t subtle at all—while he sipped on herb tea.

“Do you like cooking for other people?” Will asked. The events of the evening played in the back of his mind; he wondered again if they would ever talk about it.

“I do,” replied Hannibal. “Do you? When you cook for Simon’s guests?”

Will chuckled. “Well, I do like cooking, but I don’t exactly get to see their reactions, so I’m just left with this weird feeling that I’m cooking for no one, and that the food just disappears. Like, it’s all for nothing.”

“Would it feel better if there was that reward? Of watching the people eat the food that you had toiled over?” asked Hannibal.

“Well, most would argue that the reward is in the money that we get paid.”

“But?”

“But…money is just money. It’s necessary to sustain a life, but…” Will trailed off, not knowing where to go.

“But so is a will to live.” Hannibal completed.

“Yes…” Will replied. He set aside his empty bowl and drank some water to keep from saying something stupid.

“We must re-wrap your arm, if you’re up for it,” offered Hannibal, standing up. “And then I can drive you home.”

Will nodded, too stunned to protest. He waited as Hannibal disappeared to fetch the tools.

They reenacted what had been done before: the unwrapping of the gauze, the inspection, the cleaning, the applying of the ointment and the wrapping again. Hannibal’s hands firm and sure, not treating him like a fragile little thing. Will liked that.

“Why do you think I need therapy?” Will asked, breaking the silence. Letting Hannibal wrap his arm meant that he could get away with watching Hannibal's concentrated face more closely: there was something about that expression that Will couldn't get enough of. He should've been ashamed, he reflected, looking down. *I tried to seduce my therapist. Shame on me.*

Hannibal smiled, Will’s foreman—though finished wrapping—still possessively held in his hands. He regarded Will a moment, caressing one edge of the gauze. “The evidence is on your skin.” His gaze shifted over to Will’s other arm, which was also equally as damaged. “And, in the words you say when you let yourself speak without thinking too much.”

Will sighed softly. “I think I better go now,” he said, standing up. “You don’t have to drive me.”

But Hannibal didn’t let go of Will’s arm. “I insist.”

Will considered a moment, then gave in. “Okay.”

*

Will strapped himself in, recalling the first time he had been in Hannibal's passenger seat.

"When did it start? The cutting?" asked Hannibal unprompted.

It was a while after, when they had started moving when Will replied: "I guess…when I was 14. So…5 years ago."

"A long time." Hannibal observed.

Will waited for a question, but none came. So he continued: "I've gotten to a point where I don't think it's a negative thing at all. Actually I feel like it's the same as…like alcohol or coffee or—I don't know—eating for some people. Everyone needs a coping mechanism. Mine is just…" he looked down at his body, starting to doubt his own words. "This."

Hannibal's eyes remained focused on the road. "Being self-destructive isn't a coping mechanism that can help you, Will. Do you crave cutting yourself, find yourself itching for the blade when you've gone without it longer than you normally do?"

Will winced at the accuracy of the words. "Yes,"

"And you do it even when there's nothing that has triggered you to do it?"

"Yes,"

"It's also an addiction then. You feel the need to punish yourself even when things are not particularly bad."

"But it's not like I want to save myself—the truth is that I would welcome death if it came to me this instance. I'm just too chicken to do it myself."

Hannibal turned his face to Will for a second, as if a little surprised. He refrained from making a comment, as if waiting for Will to keep talking.

"Why do you want to help me anyway?" Will asked, though he had posed the same question the first day that they had met.

This time, Hannibal was more direct. "Because I see potential in you,"

Will was taken aback for a moment, left speechless. "Potential…for what?"

"Potential for great things." Hannibal replied.

Will was silent again. "Never thought that I'd hear such words…" he murmured.

"The people around you seemed to have let you down." Hannibal said. "Who was the first to do that, Will?"

Will sighed. "Umm…" A picture of all the people that he had known and lost slithered by in his mind. How strange, that he had no one at all now. As if he had shed friends and family along the way, and now he was left with only his hateful self for company.

“Your mother?” Hannibal offered. The answer was right, of course.

Will almost flinched, but he nodded instead. “Yeah…never knew her. She left early on.”

“And your father told you it was your fault?”

Will frowned, shocked. “I guess I see why people would choose you as their psychiatrist…”

“Am I right?” Hannibal asked, but without being smug about it.

Will nodded. “Yes. Am I that predictable?”

“And where is home?” Hannibal asked. “If you can call it your home.”

Will chuckled. “You’re right. I can’t really call it home. We used to move around a lot, but the last was Louisiana.” Now was the hardest part. The part where he could either lie or tell the truth about why he had ended up in Baltimore.

“Tell me more of your father,” said Hannibal, curiously.

Will swallowed. “We didn’t get along, except when fishing or repairing motors,” he started, a bitter taste in his mouth. “He tried to teach me, wanted me to be…manly. After a while he gave up and tried to…toughen me up, I guess. In other ways.”

“He beat you?”

“Yes.” Will replied.

“And so you ran away?”

“Yes. Although I don’t think he would consider it running away. I made sure I turned 18 before doing it so he wouldn’t be able to have a say in it or be held responsible in any way. In a way I guess he was just waiting to kick me out as soon as I turned 18.” Will snuck a glance at Hannibal: he looked fascinated.

“Why Baltimore?” Hannibal asked.

“I met someone.” Will said too quickly, realising his mistake. He wasn’t thinking.

They were nearing their destination, so Will hastily said what he had been wanting to say. “I’m sorry about earlier,” he waited for Hannibal’s response; but it seemed that Hannibal was thinking. “That was really senseless of me.”

The car stopped in the dim neighbourhood. Hannibal turned to face Will. “I just want the best for you, Will. I hope that you can see that.”

Will nodded, stupefied. “And, um…thanks for taking care of me and feeding me.”

“My pleasure.” Hannibal said. “We will continue our conversation in the next session?”

Will nodded, throwing the door open and getting out, wildly awake for the amount of undisturbed sleep he had managed earlier. “Goodnight, Dr. Lecter.” he said. He tried not to look too sad when Hannibal drove away, but nonetheless burst into tears when the car was completely out of view.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Will avoids Hannibal after his last therapy session but Hannibal shows up at his work and takes him home.
This time, Will's appointment goes well.

It was the last day of Will's holiday. He woke as he always did, with a reluctance that was harder and harder to fight with every passing day. The only thing now that really motivated him to stand up had been to slip out onto the his small balcony for a hit of nicotine, but then he thought of Hannibal, and decided against it. Maybe coffee would help, he concluded, and began boiling water.

The rest of the day was spent similarly to how he always spent his day-offs: in bed, or at least trying to read.
Will looked over his meagre collection of paperbacks that he had managed to find in thrift stores. Back in Louisiana he had had to leave behind everything: all his true crime novels, both fiction and non-fiction; and his precious books on fishing. He wished he could have the materials to make fishing lures now, just to keep his hands busy; to lose himself in the intensity of concentration.

But somehow too, he wished that he could be content with having had left his belongings behind, because it had presented him with a chance to change into a completely different person. He wondered why was it that he wanted to deny himself things that he enjoyed doing; why did he want to suppress himself so much. Perhaps it was a response to trauma. Perhaps he should ask Dr. Lecter.

*

"Will?" said Simon. Will flicked his eyes towards Simon's direction for a second, pretending to be busy with the pasta. He could get away with a lot, he mused. But panic was creeping up his chest.

"Something wrong with the food?" Will asked. He tried to appear composed.

"Oh," replied Simon, smiling and shaking her head. Will knew that he was supposed to take comfort in her. Simon had done so much for him; allowed him so much. "No. It's not that. Hannibal's here," she said.

Will froze, his hands stilling for a second. Then he resumed, not answering. It had been a week since Will hadn't seen Hannibal. It wasn't exactly like Will was avoiding Hannibal. It

was just that he didn't know he could trust himself around Hannibal after what he had done the last time.

The decision to not call Hannibal had happened after Will had found himself in bed, imagining Hannibal's arms around him. Trying to bring to mind the feeling of his hands on his naked waist, his fingers stroking through Will's hair. How it had felt to be so close to a man who felt safe; how he had so unconsciously and without thinking of consequences buried his face into Hannibal's neck. If it had felt so safe, if Will felt that Hannibal could protect him and guide him into a bearable state of mind, then why was Will morphing their innocent and well-meaning relationship into a sexual one? Why, was Will touching himself in late at night, thinking of Hannibal's arms around him?

This cannot do, Will had concluded. And so he had decided to give it a few days, to see if these dirty thoughts of his would disappear.

The problem was that they didn't. He longed to return to Hannibal. He didn't care if he was going to get hurt. But he was also tired. So tired, at being the one to be feeling all these… *feelings*, when Hannibal seemed unfazed. He probably thought of Will like more of a child. And that was how it *should* be.

"He says he has been treating you and has come to pick you up for an appointment," said Simon.

Will frowned, but nodded. He looked at the clock and was shocked to see that he only had a few minutes until he was supposed to end his shift.

"I'll tell him to wait in the parking lot, is that alright?" offered Simon. Of course, she wouldn't want the guests to see a member of the staff mixing with the likes of them. No matter how kind Simon was, that was the hard and simple truth.

"Yes, thank you." Will replied, toying with the idea of making Hannibal wait. But that would only be rude.

*

Will changed hastily and looked at himself in the cracked mirror in the staff locker room, his face ugly in its fatigue. He ducked out of the room and ran to the exit, for a second considering running to the opposite direction. Would Hannibal chase him down?

He surveyed the parking lot and found the unmistakable shadow of a man getting out of his car. Hannibal had noticed Will coming out. He walked up to Hannibal, face down as if in guilt.

"Good evening, Will." said Hannibal, his face obscured to shadows by the blinding street lamp behind him.

Will almost closed his eyes briefly at the sound of Hannibal's voice, a mixture of relief and anxiety washing over him. "Good evening, Dr. Lecter." he mumbled. He was about to speak when Hannibal spoke instead: "Shall we?"

*

“How’s your arm?” Hannibal asked, once they were seated.

“It’s…close to healed.” Will replied. “Thank you.”

Hannibal smiled, and began driving. “You’ve stopped smoking,” he said after a while.

Will couldn’t help but smile. “Yeah,” he replied. He’d taken to thinking of Hannibal whenever the urge had risen, and instead had ritually began chewing gum. It was working.

“I want to apologise for my behaviour again. I didn’t mean to…” said Will, glancing at Hannibal’s hands on the wheel.

“You don’t realise how much I worry about you, Will.” replied Hannibal.

“Sorry,” it was all that Will could think of to say.

“Don’t be sorry. I understand.”

“But—why?” Will interjected. Why do you even bother with me? He wanted to ask.

Hannibal didn’t answer immediately. Then: “Is it not likely that a psychiatrist would worry about his patient?”

Will considered a moment, undeniably disappointed, trying to let Hannibal’s words sink into him. How Hannibal had categorised them as simply psychiatrist and patient—nothing more. “I guess,” he replied.

“Though, of course, we seemed to have broken the boundaries of what a psychiatrist and a patient normally do together.”

Will felt his cheeks burn as he recalled himself naked against Hannibal. He clenched his hands into fists and tried not to say the words that were on his tongue: that he had missed Hannibal.

“Why didn’t you just call me?” asked Will.

“I wanted to see if you could overcome your fear of asking for help, so I waited instead for you to call me.”

“Hmm. Except that I couldn’t. Overcome my fear.”

“There’s no shame in that either, Will.”

“Why are you so—” Will stopped, baffled by his own train of thought. “Tolerant of me?”

“Do you think that I’m forcing myself to tolerate you? Remember, Will, I came to you.”

“You didn’t have to,” said Will, immediately hearing his father’s voice in his head: *you ungrateful little shit—*. Will tried to correct himself—say something to salvage the situation

—but Hannibal spoke first.

“I wanted to.”

*

“Shall we begin where we left off?” Hannibal asked, crossing his legs and lacing his hands together. The pose intimidated Will more than he let show.

Will had hoped that Hannibal would forget, but of course that was like wishing the impossible. As much as Will considered himself observant and attentive, Hannibal was possibly more so. Hannibal probably remembered things about Will that Will had let slip and had forgotten.

“Tell me about this person you met,” Hannibal offered, when Will remained silent.

Will sighed. There was no way out. “He was…very kind and charming at first,” he began. “During our very first days together, I thought I had the perfect opportunity to use him to get out of Louisiana. I thought I was the one manipulating him but in truth he was the one doing the manipulating,” Will stopped, looking for any reaction in Hannibal. Didn't Hannibal find it distasteful of Will to be manipulating—or trying to manipulate—people in his favour? But Hannibal simply looked back at him, waiting for Will to finish. So Will continued: “He was loving right up until the second he wasn’t,”

Hannibal still remained silent, a burning look in his eyes. Will continued:

“Our meeting felt like a coincidence but in hindsight I see that he had planned it. Stalked me until he was ready to pounce.” Will looked down at his hands, unable to keep from fidgeting. The memory of finding himself tied up washed over him. “The night when we got to Baltimore, he got me so drunk that I passed out and woke up tied up.

“It was clear that he had done this before, and wasn’t bothered about me going to the police, because who would believe me? A runaway—not even a minor anymore—he was careful like that.” Will stopped, his throat constricted. “Halfway through, he had started injecting me with drugs so that I would stay addicted, and dependant only to him. Turned me into a crazed junkie who no one would believe in,” he explained.

Hannibal’s attention was completely peaked now. “And you recovered by yourself from that?”

Will nodded. He wanted to say that it was the hardest thing that had ever happened to him, but of course, that wasn’t true. The sexual abuse had been worse.

“He had promised me things; a happy and discrete life together—but really he just wanted to keep a pet, dependant only on him, on his whims. To be used for his…pleasure. Eventually he must’ve gotten bored—I woke up in a filthy alley. Beside a dumpster.” At the last words, Will looked up at Hannibal, seeking out his reaction to the admission, that Will had fallen victim to an older man before, and no matter how much Hannibal had been kind to him, the similarities were unquestionable. Who knew if Hannibal would not be the same?

“You fear I could be the same.” Hannibal remarked, matter-of-factly. He didn’t look offended, but Will still found himself holding his breath. What if Hannibal was one to retaliate to such an accusation?

Slowly, Will nodded his head. He felt like he was betraying Hannibal by putting him into the same category as that pervert, but it was the truth. “You’ve been kind—more than kind, and have gone out of your way to take care of me.” Will continued. Then, his voice shaking and barely a whisper, he said: “But how do I know you’re not…expecting something back? And if I don’t wanna give it, are you going to take it from me by force?” He expected Hannibal to be taken aback. Surely this was an insult after all the things that Hannibal had done for him. “And…you’ve proved that you don’t want me…*that* way, so what it is?”

But Hannibal merely stayed where he was, thinking. “You’ve seen too much at such a young age.” he said. “Your paranoia is justified. Your relationships from now on will all feel like an exchange,”

Then, he leaned forward, a glint in his eyes. “Tell me, Will, have you thought about what could be done to this man? Have you thought about bringing him to justice?”

“You mean you want me to go the police?” asked Will. He didn’t want to do that. He didn’t want any record of him connecting himself to that despicable man. Besides, it was too late now.

“No. Nothing as simple as that.”

Will tilted his head in deep thought. His mind flashed back to the things that he had imagined doing to the man: cutting off the hands that had violated his body, watching the spray of copious blood paint the walls. Cutting his throat so that he couldn’t scream, just as Will hadn’t been able to scream when his mouth had been muffled. Watching him bleed out, helpless. There would be no mercy. Only justice.

Will lifted his eyes to Hannibal, as if an unspoken understanding had taken place. He felt his heart beat accelerate, in the wake of the possibility to take revenge; of the chance that he could maybe feel better after killing this man, if only even a little bit.

“What are you suggesting, Dr. Lecter?” Will asked. The question was vague, and they both knew it.

“What do you think I’m suggesting?” Hannibal said, tilting his head.

Clever, to evade the subject of what they were both thinking about. But what else could Hannibal be suggesting? Will replied, starting vague: “Everyone has thought about killing. Be it your own hands or the hand of God.”

Hannibal nodded. “If anyone were to deny not thinking about it, they would be lying.”

“I’ve thought about killing him,” Will said, and watched as a subtle smile crept up on one corner of Hannibal’s lips. It was intoxicating to witness, how it excited him that Will thought about killing.

“What’s stopping you? God? Or your morals?” Hannibal asked.

It was insane that they were having this conversation. Yet, it also felt natural. It felt easy. Will replied: “I don’t believe in God. As for morality…my own morals are malleable enough that I could live with…killing someone,” he stopped, a thrill running through him for uttering the words. “I think. The problem would be that in this world, there are people who have the power of deeming another right or wrong. I would get caught and would be prosecuted as a murderer while *he* would rest in peace. And that, I guess, is the one factor that would stop me from…killing.”

"But what if you *don't* get caught?" Hannibal prompted. For one second Will felt as if they weren't speaking of hypotheticals at all, but were actually plotting a murder. He bit his lip and tried to think of an answer.

“Do you dream about it? What he did to you?” Hannibal asked.

“Yes, to the point of being scared to fall asleep,” Will replied.

“What happens in your dreams?”

“Usually I’m running away from a man. I reach a door and try in vain to lock it, but it’s useless. The man catches up to me…and then I wake up.” There were countless version of these dreams. Too horrifying to dictate out loud. “Sometimes I’m tied up and unable to move or see…” Will found himself scowling now, bitter at what his life had come to. Unable to even find refuge in sleep. His hands shook from how strongly he was balling up his fists. He sighed and ran a hand through his hair in agitation, getting up from his chair. “Sorry,” he said, walking over to the window.

“Don’t be sorry, Will.” Hannibal said from his place. “I can see your anger—but, is it strong enough to the point of murder?”

“What he did to me—I understand. I forgive him. I think.” Will said. He had started repeating the phrase in his mind over and over again, hoping that it would stick. He *wanted* to forgive. Did he deserve what was done to him? That was the tricky part. Being able to understand a psycho’s thinking meant that Will believed deep down that he was possibly deserving of the atrocities done to him.

“Why do you want to forgive him?” Hannibal prompted, standing up and approaching Will. “You are not required to. God is not watching—you don’t believe in him.”

“Because…in a way, I guess I think that I probably deserved it.” Will replied. “I can see his point of view—that he would want to do such things to another person.”

Hannibal stood close, and regarding Will as Will was looking out the window. “Your empathy. Do you consider it a curse?”

Will eyes lit up, not in being recognised, but as if he had been caught. He nodded.

“Suppose if this man was to fall into the hands of a killer. Would you be able to understand and sympathise with the killer?”

“Yes.”

Hannibal smiled. Truly, what a brilliant boy, he thought. He could see Will killing this man, and see himself beside Will.

Suddenly, it all became clear. *This* was what Hannibal had been hoping for in Will. He turned around quickly, only to see Hannibal right behind him.

“Dr. Lecter,” Will said, his beautiful eyes glassy with tears. He felt…alive. Hopeful.

Hannibal smiled, encouragingly.

“Will you help me do it?” Will asked, finally. “Will you help me kill him?”

"Dear Will," Hannibal replied, his eyes glinting with fondness. “I was wondering when you’d ask.”

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Hannibal and Will go on an adventure.
TW: murder and lots of blood.

Over the days that followed, Will forced himself to remember all the grisly details of what had happened to him, and what he remembered of the man. He recited it all to Hannibal, witnessing the doctor's pained reaction at his protégé's extreme mistreatment. The purpose of this was to come up with a perfect death, suited only for the man.

"Think of it as theatre. You must create your scene with passion; be the author of your creation." Hannibal said.

"My design," Will said, naturally.

*

One night, the memories had become so overwhelming that Will allowed himself to cut a section of his upper arm.

The next day he showed up at Hannibal's office, purple under the eyes. Hannibal took one look at him and knew. He sat Will down on the sofa and presented his medical bag. Will wordlessly pulled away his hoodie and surrendered himself to Hannibal.

Hannibal carefully peeled away the cheap band-aids that Will had haphazardly plastered on his wounds, which had bled through were very uncomfortable. Will closed his eyes, taking refuge at how tenderly Hannibal held his arm. He was going to say something to explain why he had self-harmed—he ought to, he thought. He didn't want Hannibal to think that he had self-harmed as a result of Hannibal's therapy. No, this was entirely on him. This was proof of his weakness.

"Don't, Will. Don't go inside." Hannibal spoke first, his thumb pressing down on a cut that had started bleeding again. "Stay with me."

Will lifted his eyes to Hannibal's. Looking at him somewhat alleviated the dark pressure inside his head; helped him ground himself back to the present.

Hannibal continued: "Without death we'd be at a loss. It's the prospect of death that drives us to greatness. His death will elevate you; to a greatness only a few can achieve. I already see it in you. You glow with it." Hannibal smiled sweetly. Will's heart fluttered when Hannibal looked at Will like that; like Will was a thing he cherished dearly.

Will smiled, despite himself. The words rung true—they didn't sound like they were to meant to brush up his ego. "How many people have you killed?" Will asked, the question slipping out of his mouth.

"Many," Hannibal replied, his eyes challenging.

The answer should have sent a chill down his spine, but it was reassuring. Reassurance that Will himself wasn't as insane as he thought he was.

"How does that make you feel?" asked Hannibal. The bleeding had seemed to stop. Hannibal applied a salve to the wound and wrapped gauze over it.

Will didn't need to think for an answer. "It's…comforting." he replied.

*

"Tell me, Will, why didn't he kill you?" Hannibal asked.

"Because he's simply not a killer. He…feeds on terrifying young, untouched boys. Delights in watching them break and suffer; it excites him to be the one to see them ruined."

Hannibal mulled over the details Will had given him: early 40s, white, medium build and height. Light hair, no tattoos. Plain, but charming. Hands rough, as if they were being washed multiple times a day. A smell of turpentine on some of his clothes. Rich enough that he could afford drugs and keep Will in a sound-proof room.

Who in Baltimore could fit the profile?

Hannibal closed his eyes and thought, winding through his mind's hallways.

He remembered a dinner party he had hosted 5 years ago; he remembered an almost-conversation he had had with a guest's plus one; introduced as an 'aspiring artist'. Hannibal had feigned interest, until a sentence uttered by the drunken man had alarmed him. "You and I might have similar tastes," he was saying. His hands were holding open a large hardcover book pulled without permission from Hannibal's shelves; the page held open at Two Figures on a Bed by Francis Bacon. Hannibal had remained silent, waiting for more words to come blabbering out of this man's mouth when someone else had come to drag Hannibal off. Later Hannibal had asked someone for the man's name—not because he interested Hannibal, but because he had been distastefully drunk and mannerless. He wished to ask the man himself for his card but the man was nowhere in sight.

"Mason Verger," someone had told him. "He's unpopular because of his behaviour but his art is…impactful. Lots of red. Punches you in the face,"

"Tell me the name he gave you," Hannibal had asked Will. Will couldn't remember where the man resided. All he had was his despicable name, and the repulsive memories of his torture.

"He said his name was Jackson, but to just call him Jack," Will had said.

Jackson. Mason. Close enough.

Hannibal googled what Mason Verger was up to now, and found little information. The man had apparently cleaned up his act after his big break and now was a recluse, who sold only to private buyers and rarely showed up for shows. An obscure website showed a grainy photograph of Mason.

Hannibal smiled and hummed in approval. Now all that was needed was Will's confirmation.

*

"I need you to prepare yourself for this," Hannibal said, swiping at his screen to stop at Mason's face.

Will stiffened, eyes growing wide with horror. He tried to speak but no words came. "Are you saying you've possibly found him?"

Hannibal nodded. Honestly, he wasn't sure how Will was going to react. But the panic in Will's face was more than he had expected. He looked like he wasn't ready for a killing at all.

"Maybe now is not the time. Do you need to think about it first?" suggested Hannibal, though he knew that that was more or less useless.

"What's his name?" Will asked instead.

"A man called Mason Verger. A painter,"

Will fidgeted with his hands and nodded absent-mindedly. "I want to see," he replied.

Hannibal handed his phone to Will, who was visibly turning white in the face. His lips trembled as if in an attempt to speak. He stumbled, dropping the phone and falling into Hannibal's hands. "Will." Hannibal said, guiding him to the sofa.

"I can't breathe," Will whispered, hyperventilating. He shut his eyes and whimpered, body shaking.

"It's alright, Will. I'm here," said Hannibal. "I'm here."

Will tried, unaware of how strongly he held onto Hannibal's hands. "It's him," he choked out. "It's really him."

Hannibal brushed away the hair away from Will's face, until Will felt the panic subside a little. "Just breathe, Will." Hannibal said. "We will find him, and give him what he deserves."

*

Will laid with his head cradled in Hannibal's lap. He opened his eyes—in surprise—but it was a pleasant surprised. He reflected about how easily he seemed to fall asleep in Hannibal's presence. "Hannibal," Will said. He hadn't meant to say it. It had always been Dr. Lecter up until now. But something had changed between them: they were no longer doctor and patient. Now, they were something more. "Sorry—I didn't mean to call you that," Will explained.

But Hannibal was smiling in amusement. In affection. “Will—I was waiting for you to call me by my first name,” he said. “I didn’t want to force it on you.”

Will swallowed, losing himself in Hannibal’s eyes. “But…isn’t it a little disrespectful?”

“No, it isn’t, Will.”

“Um…okay. How long had I been asleep?” Will asked, not moving. He wanted to stay where he was as long as possible; until Hannibal either pushed him away or until he was physically unable to.

“Not long. Half an hour,” Hannibal said, smoothing his thumb over Will’s temple.

Will closed his eyes and nodded. “Why do you continue to endure me?”

“Because I’m your friend.”

It was a shocking answer, one that Will felt he didn’t deserve. He opened his eyes and sat up, facing Hannibal. “Are you sure?” Will asked.

Hannibal nodded, without hesitancy. “And friends help each other when necessary,” Hannibal said. “I’m sorry I triggered you, showing you his face.”

Will shook his head. “It’s not your fault,” he replied. It was Mason Verger’s fault. Will felt hot with rage as he thought about watching the life slip out the man’s eyes.

“How did you manage to find him?” Will asked.

“I burrowed through my mind and chased a memory. He was present at a dinner party I hosted 5 years ago,”

Will raised his brows in surprise. “You—wow. You must have a lot of dirt on the Baltimore social scene,”

Hannibal smiled knowingly. “That I do,” he said. “Are you sure you want to go through with it?”

Will nodded. “I’ve never been so sure in my life.” He felt a growl deep in his throat. “I want to rip him apart.”

*

Hannibal lifted a hand and turned the door handle, taking a step into the dark room. Will could still feel the warmth of Hannibal’s hands where they had rested on his cheeks earlier. “Ready?” Hannibal had asked. His smile had had a twisted maliciousness to it, which was both frightening and delicious to witness. It was as if they were embarking on an exciting adventure—except that this adventure was a bloody and harrowing one.

“Ready.” Will had replied, heart racing.

As soon as the light from the hallway flooded into the room, Will could see the bed, which was so enormous that for a moment it seemed like it was all bed-sheets, and that no man lay underneath. But then Will followed Hannibal further into the room and recognised a head of wispy, grey-blonde hair. He felt his jaw clench of its own will.

Hannibal turned to Will and smiled, a giddy sort of look in his rich brown eyes. Even with his plastic suit on, Hannibal looked ridiculously handsome. Will had his own plastic suit on, but he would have to get used to it, it seemed.

Will watched as Hannibal silently reached a hand near the man's face, puzzled at what Hannibal was going to do, when Hannibal pinched the man's nostrils. The man jerked breathlessly, disheveled and irritated. "What—"

"Hello," said Hannibal, calmly.

Before the man could utter another word, Hannibal seized him by the shoulders and banged the back of his head into the wall, the force so strong that Will flinched. He watched as Mason lost consciousness and slumped against the bed. For a second Will feared that the man was dead. And in that split second, a part of him hoped that Hannibal had done the job for him swiftly, and that he wouldn't have to do anything. He looked over at Hannibal, who had begun dragging the man out of the bed. The severity of reality was slowly sinking into Will: the way Hannibal had been so sure and unhesitant in his movement, *this* was how Will was to act now. It was only natural to question if he could do it: but he was sure Hannibal would be there to help when he faltered.

"Come, little one." Hannibal said, his hair pristine and his skin devoid of sweat, unlike Will. "Time to get going."

Will's heart warmed at the nick-name; he immediately felt at ease and moved to lift the man's feet so that he could help Hannibal. Strangely; miraculously, he didn't feel panic at touching the man. Only determination.

*

Mason startled awake when Hannibal splashed cold water over his face. The man looked about him. Panic lit up his eyes as he saw that he was tied naked and spread-eagled on the floor of his own basement. "What the fuck is going on—" he began, but was once again shut up when Hannibal slapped him across the face.

"It would be wise to stay quiet, Mr. Verger."

Mason made some unintelligible noises, confused.

Hannibal stepped back until he was standing shoulder to shoulder with Will. He raised a hand and placed it on Will's shoulder, as if they had the utmost trust in each other. Which, they did. "Remember him?" asked Hannibal.

Mason stared at Will, recognition dawning on his face. "You…" he said, eyes glaring.

“I don’t need you to speak. Nod if you remember.” commanded Hannibal, moving threateningly towards Mason. “You do not deserve to speak in the presence of such a brilliant young man,” he said.

Will almost laughed at how petty Hannibal was being.

Mason did as he was told and nodded frantically, the first beads of sweat appearing on his forehead. His panicked eyes darted to Will, as if he was recalling all the things that he had done to Will, and was fearing that he was going to be treated the same. But in truth, he was going to get worse. So much worse.

Will looked at Hannibal, who nodded as if to start what they had come here to do.

Will approached Mason until he was barely an inch away from the man, rage slowly but surely coming alive inside of him. Before he knew what he was doing, he shot out his foot and kicked the man brutally in the ribs, sudden screams filling the room. How ironic that the room was sound-proof.

“Please, don’t—” Mason pleaded when Will landed another kick, and then another, until he found his rage truly awake and seething inside of himself.

“How does it feel, now?” Will said. “When no one can hear you?” He lifted his foot again and kicked, resulting in more howling. “When no one is going to help you, save you?”

“Please,” the man pleaded. “Please—”

“Enough,” Will said, swiftly grabbing a knife. “I will render you speechless.” He kneeled over the man and brought the knife close to his face. “Just as you had done to me once,”

Will rummaged into the man’s mouth until he took hold of his tongue. He looked up and saw that Hannibal was holding the man’s head by the sides to keep him steady. They nodded to each other as Will manoeuvred the knife across that despicable tongue, slicing away until the man was garbling in his own blood.

He dropped the bloody mass onto the floor, lifting his bloodied hand to peer at it. Seeing another’s blood in copious amounts was somehow soothing. He watched as drops fell onto the floor below, a musical pitter-patter.

“Beautiful, isn’t it?” Hannibal said, who had appeared behind Will. Will felt a steadying hand on his shoulder again. “I’m so proud of you, Will.” Hannibal said. Will smiled, turning to face Hannibal.

“I’ve only just started.” he said, face radiant.

*

Will continued, with Hannibal’s help when needed.

He took the away the hands which had touched, groped; hit and done so many unspeakable things to him, and to the other countless boys like him.

He took away the feet so that the man had no illusions that he could possibly run away from his fate.

Finally, Will sawed off the genitals that had committed all sorts of atrocities—was the source of all this evil—to have driven this man to do such heinous things to innocent people.

Will didn't explain what he was doing to Mason while he was doing it: Mason didn't need to know. He didn't deserve an explanation.

"See, Will?" said Hannibal, towards the end. "The things that you can do; the potential that you have,"

For his first kill, it was impressive. Hannibal hadn't expected less, but he still found it too good to be true. They sat on the floor, watching the life bleeding out of the man—not really a man now but resembling more like a creature who had yet to be discovered by mankind. All the surface of its skin was drenched in blood—dried or otherwise. Will watched as the spurting fountains ceased their ferocity and calmed to a stream. Strangely, he took comfort in the steady flow. It was endless, for now, and a rare sight to behold. Even as it was streaming out of the most vile being ever, he still felt strangely mesmerised by it.

"How did you know that I could go through with it?" Will asked, in a low voice.

Hannibal tilted his head, eyes on the creature. "I had a feeling," he replied. "That you would understand. That if I mentioned it to you, suggested it to you—you would understand one who would want to kill. You wouldn't be alarmed by my suggesting it. You would understand even if you didn't want to do it,"

"I always considered it a curse…that I could find such violence…beautiful. That I could understand it."

"Are you having conflicting feelings? Do you feel that I have influenced you into this?" Hannibal asked, now turning his body to Will.

Will shook his head. "No. It was always there. You…helped bring it out of me," he turned his own body towards Hannibal, reaching a hand out. "Thank you, Hannibal."

Hannibal took Will's hand in his and smiled. "I need you to know that this doesn't mean you owe me, Will. You've helped me as much as I've helped you."

Will laughed softly. "What could I possibly have helped you with?" he asked, oblivious.

"You certainly have helped me feel less…alone," Hannibal said, turning his eyes down. It was an admittance that Hannibal was reluctant to share, but it needed to be said. If Will was able to be vulnerable around Hannibal, then he wanted to do that in return for Will too.

When Hannibal lifted his eyes again, Will's lip was trembling; his eyes were glassy. Suddenly he shot forward, bringing his arms around Hannibal in a tight embrace. Hannibal was surprised. He lifted his own arms around Will. He had expected Will to be disgusted at what they had done; to turn away in shame from Hannibal.

“You make me feel less alone, too.” Will murmured against Hannibal’s ears. Hannibal closed his eyes, smiling. Those words had been like music.

*

“Strange,” Will said. “I’ve killed someone.”

Hannibal took his eyes off the road for a second to acknowledge that he was listening. They were nearing Will’s apartment.

Mason would be found dead in his home in the morning or whenever someone was going to check up on him—placed on a stretch of white canvas. His bleeding heap of a body positioned like a morbid puzzle.

Hannibal and Will had surveyed Mason’s vast home and witnessed the paintings: violent strokes and distorted limbs. Skin pale and frail—belonging only to young, innocent things. It was apparent that Mason had taken the inspiration for his art from the boys that he had used and tortured.

Now, he was his own inspiration and source. Immortalised in a horrific, violent painting.

Will continued: “It should feel like an ugly thing—but it doesn’t.”

“How does it make you feel, then?” Hannibal asked curiously. Despite the long night, he looked like he always did: composed, and in control.

Will took a deep breath and closed his eyes, recalling the blood. “Powerful.”

Hannibal smiled proudly. “Good. Remember that feeling.”

The car stopped outside Will’s apartment. There was an awkward silence as Will reached for the door handle, and then stopped. He turned to Hannibal slightly but not completely, suddenly shy. He wanted to convey to Hannibal how much their night had meant for him, but he wasn’t good with words. Not like Hannibal, who never lacked for words. “Hannibal…” he began. “I’ll never forget this…how much you’ve done for me…It's the most anyone has ever done for me.” He turned completely to Hannibal now, looking into his eyes.

Hannibal looked back fondly, and then reached out a hand slowly: giving Will a chance to move away. But Will leaned into the touch, offering the side of his face to fit Hannibal’s hand. He closed his eyes, and then brought his own hand over Hannibal’s.

"We've done this together: we have truly bonded. And now you may rest assured that I will never leave you, Will. I will never abandon you." replied Hannibal. How had he known that Will had already started thinking about being abandoned by Hannibal? That he had completely admitted to himself that he was attached to Hannibal, and couldn’t bear to be torn apart from him?

“It will take a while to feel that my words are true, I know. But we will get there. Alright?” continued Hannibal.

Will nodded, feeling on the verge of tears. He felt himself ache when Hannibal lowered his hand. “You must get some rest now, Will. You did very well.”

Will opened the door and got out. “Thank you, for today.” he said.

Hannibal smiled. And then, as if to lift the mood: “I must find you a better accommodation, Will.”

Will frowned playfully. “Uh…we’re not having this discussion now,” he said, though he knew that Hannibal wasn’t going to give up.

“You don’t realise how much I worry about you, Will.” Hannibal began, mirroring Will in tone. “Would it be too far to say that I want you nearer to me? Preferably in a much safer neighbourhood?”

Will chuckled, cheeks reddening. “It’s…not too far so I think I’ll be okay,”

“Just this week there’s been two stabbings,” remarked Hannibal.

“You’ve been keeping track?” Will asked, genuinely impressed and a little giddy.

“As I said, you don’t realise how much I worry about you, Will.”

“I know,” Will said, somewhat seriously. “Let me just—think about it,” he said. He wasn’t about to give up either. He paused then spoke: “I’ll see you soon?” He wanted to show that he wanted to see Hannibal as much as Hannibal seemingly wanted to see Will.

Hannibal smiled in surprise, then nodded. “Yes, Will.”

“Goodnight, Hannibal.”

“Goodnight, Will.”

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Will discovers a truth about himself--that he has a taste for murder.
But then he discovers another truth about Hannibal too.

Barely ten days had passed and Will found himself moving out. If there was one thing Hannibal was good at, it was persuasion. Will payed what he could, but Hannibal payed most. The rent was obviously astounding but at least he was walking distance to Hannibal's now. And, he could come in and out—avoiding office hours, of course—whenever he wanted: Hannibal had given him a spare key.

"What do they do—that they end up dead…by your hand?" Will asked. They had somehow, without discussing it, begun making and having dinner together most nights. "If…it's okay to ask,"

Hannibal paused his hand, placing his knife down. "Of course you can ask," he said. "You've bared yourself to me. I should return the courtesy."

Will bit his lip. Somehow that didn't feel right to him, as if he didn't deserve it, yet. "You don't have to—I mean…you don't owe me anything."

"I see that you find it hard to accept that we're equals now." Hannibal smiled. "I want to share with you—and provide you answers to any of your questions."

Will nodded. "I'm…honoured."

"To answer your question…it could be anything, but mostly all they need to do is to be rude to me," Hannibal walked over to a drawer and presented Will with his rolodex, flipping through the numerous cards. "See," he said. "I pick one when the mood presents itself."

Will raised his brows in pleasant astonishment. "It's a wonder I'm still alive seeing as how I spoke to you the day we met," he laughed. "Why didn't you kill me?"

Hannibal considered but was quite frankly baffled for an answer, so he chose to answer simply: "I was enthralled." Will watched him, carefully. "Not only by your beauty…but also by the look in your eyes. That anger. The intensity of it."

*

Several days later as Will was working, slashing his knife away at the meat, he felt a flash of hunger. He recalled how it had felt to cut at Mason, how it had felt to see the life flow out of

him. He realised then that he wanted more. He entertained the idea of mentioning it to Hannibal, and imagining Hannibal's excitement.

"Someone was rude to me recently," said Will, as soon as he was in Hannibal's office next.

Hannibal paused his sketching, and looked up. There was an undeniable spark in his eyes. "Indeed?"

"I went on an errand for Simon," Will continued. "Wanted me to go to this store to buy truffle. It was an emergency. The clerk didn't recognise that I was one of Simon's. He… looked at me and made a comment that you wouldn't have tolerated,"

Hannibal had his fingers laced together, waiting eagerly for the story.

"He looked at me and told me that he didn't sell to the homeless."

Hannibal raised his brows and smiled bitterly. There was fire in his eyes. He let out a breath and stood, pouring a glass of wine. "That was rude indeed," he said, taking a sip.

Will descended the ladder and approached Hannibal. "I want to kill him."

*

Will balanced his knife on the man writhing with agony on the table. This was to be the cut that would kill him. He felt Hannibal approach from behind him, making his presence known.

"Good, Will." he whispered, staring at the man from over Will's shoulder. Will felt Hannibal lift an arm around him and place it gently over his heart. Will knew he was checking how fast —or slow—Will's heart rate was. It was calm.

"I'm here, Will." Hannibal said, in consolation. "This is the reckoning you deserve. Take it."

Will poised his hand to take the perfect aim, the aura of his true ability emanating from him.

Flecks of blood shot out and landed on Will's face: the mark of a killer. He lowered his knife, staring into the man who was no more. Hannibal waited; he wanted Will to truly absorb what he had done; how glorious taking a life could be. Satisfied, Will slowly turned around and faced Hannibal. The moonlight radiated Will's face, the dark of the blood a harsh contrast to his pale skin. Will drew closer to Hannibal, dropping the knife at their feet. He fell into Hannibal's arms, morphing into him. "Hannibal," he said, victorious. "I did it."

*

Will had thought that Hannibal simply killed his victims for the thrill of it. But now he realised that that was only one part of it.

Will watched as Hannibal pried the heart out with surgical precision.

Suddenly, Will jolted with realisation: “You’re the Chesapeake ripper,” Will stated, his voice hollow, as if into the air.

Hannibal looked at Will, and smiled proudly. “Well done, Will.” he said.

Will had been reading around The Ripper for years now. The FBI still hadn’t figured out what he did with his trophies. Will felt his stomach drop, in horror and in fascination; images of Hannibal’s hands preparing meals flashing in his head. “You eat them,” he said.

Hannibal looked at Will as if he was going to retaliate. He waited patiently for an answer, for Will to make up his mind about how he was going to feel about eating the man.

But Will remained silent. He didn’t know what he was feeling. Only that he was never going to completely know what surprises lied ahead with Hannibal.

*

So, cannibalism had been the thing that made Will stop in his tracks and reflect whether what he was doing with Hannibal was indeed insane, and, wrong. He had been expecting himself to fall into this line of thinking sooner or later; the calm and clarity he had felt after murdering Mason had somehow suspiciously and smoothly escaped weighing on his conscience. He should have been feeling guilty if he was sane. But somehow, he hadn’t.

And now that *this* was happening, what was he doing to do? He knew that Hannibal wasn’t going to retaliate if he refused to dine with him: they were past that point now. But where was the line going to be drawn with Hannibal? What was the most insane thing that they could do together?

He stayed silent and brooding on the ride home. *Home*—how strange now that he considered Hannibal’s home his own.

“What’s on your mind?” Hannibal said. He looked worried, but also looked satisfied watching Will work out his thoughts.

“I think you know,” Will replied. He hadn’t meant to sound so sarcastic.

“Do you feel bad for the victims?” Hannibal asked. “That I eat them,”

“The thing is I don’t know what to feel,” at least he was being honest.

“That’s only a natural reaction,” Hannibal stated.

When they arrived home, Will asked: “Are you gonna cook his heart for dinner?”

Hannibal nodded, somewhat with a hesitancy. But he wasn’t going to suggest cooking something else for Will. Instead, he waited for what Will was going to do.

Will sighed and nodded. “Is it okay if I take a nap?” he hoped that Hannibal would get the hint that maybe if Will didn’t witness the process of cooking his victim’s heart, then maybe

consuming him would be easier. Because, somehow he wanted to. Wanted to do the same things that Hannibal did. With Hannibal.

“Of course, Will.” Hannibal replied, lifting a hand to stroke away at Will’s curls. After the revelation of what Hannibal truly was—a cannibal, the gesture should have made him cringe away. But he accepted it with an eagerness that was surprising to himself. “You did well,” Hannibal said.

Will smiled. He was starting to realise how he had taken to Hannibal’s showers of praise. Of course, the initial reaction had been that he didn’t deserve it. And that too much of a good thing was a bad thing. But he tried not to think too much beyond that. “Thank you,” he said, and ascended the stairs into the room that had somehow become his without their discussing it.

*

Will was just drifting into a dream when he felt himself being nudged awake.

“Will?”

He turned to see Hannibal, kneeling by his bed. He frowned as he tried to recall the dream, echoes of a familiar voice calling him beloved, over and over again. “I passed out,” Will muttered, smiling as Hannibal watched him stretch.

“Dinner’s ready,” Hannibal stated, not staying to watch Will’s reaction. Will felt himself ache as he always did, when he watched Hannibal move away from him. As soon as he descended the stairs, he remembered. Oh, right. He was going to be dining on a *human heart.*

The air smelled heavenly, though.

Hannibal was waiting when he entered the dining room, holding out Will’s chair.

“Thank you,” Will said as he sat down. The dish was already laid out, and was waiting to be sliced into. As usual, the presentation was remarkable in every way; even if Will hadn’t been hungry, he was sure that he would’ve wanted a bite.

Hannibal then skewered the heart and began slicing it, offering the first cut to Will. Will could see that it was stuffed with herbs and mushrooms, and was wrapped in beautiful slices of pancetta. He lifted his eyes to Hannibal as Hannibal took his own piece and sat down, ready to eat.

“Smells delicious,” Will said, unable to hide the nervousness in his voice. He lifted his fork and knife, carving out a bite. Under Hannibal’s gaze, he lifted it to his mouth when Hannibal spoke at the last minute:

“You don’t have to eat it, Will. If you don’t want to.” The suggestion seemed genuine, without any hidden meaning behind it.

Will paused, considering for a second. He wasn’t going to make his mind without not trying it first. He opened his mouth again and transferred the meat inside, chewing slowly as

Hannibal watched his jaw move, with a fascinated intensity. It was almost sexual, as Will swallowed and watched Hannibal watching him down the meat.

He looked back at Hannibal wordlessly, and then took another bite. Hannibal, meanwhile, was almost smirking and began feasting on his own portion.

After a few bites, the meal felt like any other with Hannibal: delicious, and crafted to make you savour the ingredients. Will closed his eyes as he tasted butter, the combination a delightful one with the human heart. He found that he was unconsciously smiling. He could get used to this, he thought.

When he opened his eyes, Hannibal was watching him again. Not judging, but watching.

“Do all of your victims have to be rude to turn up on your dinner table?” Will asked.

“Whenever feasible, one should always try to eat the rude,” Hannibal said.

Will chuckled. He thought about how close he had come to being eaten by Hannibal.

“How’s your meal?” Hannibal asked.

“Oh—” Will began. “It’s—delicious, obviously. And,”

Hannibal watched patiently, sipping on wine.

“I haven’t made up my mind yet, but…for now I am…not against it, as you can see.”

Will’s plate was devoid of the meat, only a half eaten carrot left on the edge of the plate. “Theres’s an undeniable sense of satisfaction humming through me now that I’ve consumed someone who had offended me,” he admitted. “May I have another slice?” Will asked, watching as Hannibal rose to serve him again, a content look on his face.

*

When Will went home that night—not because he wanted to, but because he thought that he should—he laid awake in bed, thinking of what had happened. Not the cannibalism part—but the part where he was so hopelessly attached to Hannibal, that he knew now that he would do anything for Hannibal. Including cannibalising people.

But as close as Will thought himself to be to Hannibal, it still felt like it wasn’t enough. Somehow, he wanted to be closer still. Wanted to be skin to skin, mouth to mouth, until it was impossible to tell where he began and where he ended.

Will closed his eyes and imagined being cradled in Hannibal’s arms. Eventually and inevitably, he pictured those hands sliding down, caressingly, between his legs. Will slid his own hand down and sighed. He couldn’t stop himself.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Will is insecure and questions his relationship with Hannibal.
Hannibal provides answers, and straight out talks about love—but doesn't clarify if this means that they are lovers.
Will lets it rest for a while.

Will was up engrossed in Hannibal's endless books. The solitude and quiet that came with it was part of the reason why he spent hours upon hours there, sometimes noticing Hannibal by his desk and sometimes not. It was peaceful, he had come to realise. Currently, he was unexpectedly making his way through Godwin's Caleb Williams. The words were packed and the prose dense—reading even five pages seemed to take him ages—but, he mused, it wasn't about finishing the book. It was about the journey.

He blinked his tired eyes and memorised the page number instead of marking his place, because he didn't want to damage Hannibal's books.

Will peered down and watched Hannibal, who was on his desk, concentrating on a sketch. He liked observing Hannibal when he was in his own world like this, though it never lasted as long as Will wanted. Hannibal always noticed when he was being watched.

Will watched as long as he could, admiring the lock of hair that fell over Hannibal's eyes which normally he would've rectified immediately. He wondered if that meant Hannibal was comfortable around Will.
And then Hannibal spoke, without looking up: "Should we have a therapy session, Will?"

Will almost yelped and retreated back into the shadows, hoping he was out of sight from Hannibal. Pretending he hadn't heard.

When he dared to peer back down again, Will gasped properly this time. Hannibal had magically appeared under him, looking up. "Why are you hiding?" he asked, a bemused and affectionate look on his face.

"I'm not hiding," Will replied, blushing.

"Come down," Hannibal said, tilting his head.

Will bit his lip, wondering what would happen if he refused. But he stood up and descended the ladder, taking the hand which Hannibal had offered him.

Hannibal held onto Will's hand, tugging until Will was able to meet his eyes. "What's on your mind?" he asked.

Not this again, Will thought. He was finding it hard enough to be this near around Hannibal anyway. He didn't trust himself anymore. He shouldn't have come here.

"Nothing," he replied, trying to keep a neutral expression.

Hannibal took a few steps until they were closer, and regarded Will. "Strange," Hannibal said. "This might be the first time you have lied to me,"

Will swallowed, instantly feeling guilty. Hannibal didn't deserved to be lied to. He lowered his head. "I didn't mean to," he said.

"It's alright, Will," Hannibal said, putting a hand against Will's face. "I don't want to force you to talk of things you are not ready to,"

Will nodded.

"But as your psychiatrist, you have to talk to me about things that bother you,"

Will scoffed, almost. Right. He was a patient to Hannibal, and nothing more. He lifted his eyes to meet Hannibal's, suddenly in a rush to straight out ask the question that had been bothering him for so long. "How do you see me?" Will asked. "What am I to you now?"

Hannibal observed Will for a moment, his hands moving to place themselves on Will's arms. "Certainly more than a friend," replied Hannibal. "A companion, if you'll have me."

"A companion," Will repeated. It sounded above him, something that he never would've thought could be applied to him.

"You understand me, Will."

Will smiled. He wondered if there had ever been others, who had come close to what he was now to Hannibal. And if so, where were they now? Were they dead, or were they barely living, like abandoned toys? Was there a possibility that Hannibal had been playing with him all along, and that Will was no more than a pet? Could he possibly keep Hannibal surprised? What scared most of all was the thought of Hannibal becoming bored of him—and then abandoning him, leaving him to die alone.

Hannibal was no doubt a dangerous man: one whose mind worked in mysterious ways. If Hannibal were to be plotting to kill Will, Will was sure that he wouldn't see it coming. And yet, he accepted that if this was so, he would prefer it that way. Death comes to all of us, and if he were to choose, he would prefer to die by Hannibal's hand. That, or to die together with Hannibal.

It didn't seem like an appropriate line of questioning, now that Will felt himself clutched in the claws of what could only be called love.

"Hannibal…" he murmured, instead.

Hannibal looked back tenderly. When he looked like this, it was too apparent that Will's doubts regarding their relationship were merely that: doubts. And that it was perhaps not

surprising that Will was thinking in this pessimistic way, given his history.

“Yes, Will?” Hannibal replied, voice thick as honey.

Will fell into Hannibal, locking his arms around Hannibal’s waist. He felt tears sting his eyes. Will gathered himself and spoke: “Please don’t ever leave me,” he said, feeling Hannibal’s arms wound around him. Will felt a shudder pass through him when he felt a kiss land on his temple.

“Never,” Hannibal promised.

*

“Tell me, Will. When is your birthday?” Hannibal asked one day. Will had to double-check if he had imagined it or if Hannibal had actually spoken. But Hannibal was looking at him expectantly.

“Why? So you can shower me with presents?” Will retorted. He rudely turned back to Hannibal’s laptop—which Will practically owned now. Recently he had started researching colleges as per Hannibal’s suggestion.

Hannibal spoke again.“You seem like a winter child, am I correct?”

Will had to stop himself from rolling his eyes. Of course Hannibal would guess correctly. “I’ll tell you if you promise not to buy me anything,” Will suggested. He was serious, but he knew that Hannibal would never listen.

“Is it after the new year?”

“You tell me yours first,” Will said, turning his full attention to Hannibal.

“I have a feeling you won’t tell me even if I tell you mine,”

“Well…you’re not wrong,” Will laughed. He enjoyed prodding Hannibal like this; enjoyed that Hannibal let himself be prodded like this.

“Why so stubborn, Will?” Hannibal asked, tilting his head. “It’s just a birthday,”

Will scoffed. “Well, no. It’s not just a birthday if you’re going to do something ridiculous,”

“Tell me, Will. When you let yourself think about what you want the most in life, what do you think of?” Hannibal asked.

Will didn’t need to think for the answer to appear in his mind, but he was hesitant of saying it out loud. It seemed like such a pathetic, if not an outright unachievable thing to wish for, for the truth was that the wish was universal—and only the luckiest of people were able to acquire it. He felt his brows naturally knit themselves together, thinking of how to not humiliate himself. “I—” began Will, but his words were stuck in his throat. He lifted his eyes up to Hannibal’s: they were devoid of any expectancy, or anything that could influence Will’s

answer. Will gulped, and then answered: “I want to be loved.” His voice was hoarse, though he had only but uttered a few words. “Unconditionally.”

Suddenly, Will found his throat seize up in pain, as if a dam had been broken inside of him, and the tears were flooding out. “All my life,” he said, a tear escaping. “I’d been so lonely.” A sob made itself out of his throat, followed by many more. It was impossible to stop now. He began shaking, until he felt himself subdued by Hannibal’s arms, which had appeared without him noticing. Will leaned into Hannibal, bringing his arms around Hannibal’s neck. “I just want to be loved,” he said.

Hannibal squeezed back in return. The embrace was working: soon Will found that he was shaking less and less. It had felt good to let those words out.

“You’re not alone anymore, Will.” said Hannibal, stroking the back of Will’s head, which has become one the things that Will had come to crave. “I’m here for you,”

Will nodded: it was true. Hannibal did make him feel less lonely, it was just that he needed constant re-assurances. He reminded himself—no matter how much he tried not to—that it probably wasn’t his fault that he had abandonment issues.

“I’m sorry for being like this,” he said nonetheless, feeling childish in his antics.

“Do not apologise,” replied Hannibal, slowly pulling back.

Will eased his own hands, and let them rest on Hannibal’s shoulders. Hannibal was looking into his face, lingeringly. Then he saw Hannibal’s hands raise and place themselves on the sides of his head, thumb caressing his cheeks. The way that Hannibal looked at him, it was clear that the words Hannibal had said were true. Will exhaled as if in a sigh and realised in that moment that he loved Hannibal. Even if Hannibal didn’t love him back. It was enough to be in his arms; to be here listening to his words.

But then Hannibal said something that Will had only been dreaming of hearing: “And I can love you, Will, if you will let me.”

Will stared back in disbelief. He spoke without thinking: “You can love me?”

“Yes,”

“Meaning you can make yourself love me?” And haven’t loved me all this while, he thought.

“Will, that doesn’t mean that I haven’t loved you all this while. In truth I can say that I had already started loving you since that day I laid eyes on you.” replied Hannibal. “I don’t have to *make* myself love you—it would just mean that I can show it to you now, if only you will let me.”

Will shifted against Hannibal’s touch, listening as Hannibal continued: “Being loved is as much a task and a sacrifice as loving someone. You will have to overcome a lot of your fears to let me love you. And, you will start to question if you even deserve love,”

In truth no one is ever really, wholly deserving of it. We all have qualities to us that make us evil, or morally wrong in the eyes of people and God. But luckily for you, I am more forgiving of the qualities in you that people would deem wrong. You deserve everything, Will. Most of all love."

As beautiful a declaration as it was, Will found that he was crying again. He sniffled, looking down with a trembling lip.

"Oh, Will." said Hannibal. "My beautiful boy,"

Something broke inside Will, yet again. Just as a fresh tear escaped his eyes, Hannibal leaned forward and delicately kissed the spot just where the tear was trickling, sucking the it away. He then moved onto the other cheek and dried the tears with more kisses, as if to suck the sorrow out of the skin. Will felt his breath catch, his grip strengthening on Hannibal's shoulders.

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal get intimate-but there are complications.
(If you're uncomfortable with smut I'm sorry)

It was surprising that Will was sometimes allowed to lay horizontal on Hannibal's sofa. He was just drifting off to sleep with a book in hand when he felt Hannibal's presence looming over him. He smiled, and then moved to make space for Hannibal. He wanted to be held, and was about to say so when Hannibal slipped off his shoes and settled next to Will, placing an arm under Will's head. Will swivelled onto his side and laid his head on Hannibal's chest, the safety and warmth alarmingly comfortable.

At times like these, when they were in each others' arms, Will was unable *not* to think about how they could be lovers. Hannibal was a mentor, a teacher. His companion. He could also be his lover, Will thought. When he felt Hannibal's fingers brush at his temple where his hairline began, Will was positive that the affection was not just…fatherly. There was something there. Something more.

"Hannibal," Will spoke, voice a little louder than he had expected.

Hannibal made an unintelligible sound, snuffed against Will's head. Will hadn't though about what exactly he was going to say, so he kept quiet, testing if Hannibal would notice. If Hannibal wasn't going to, then Will was going to let the subject rest, he decided. He closed his eyes and drifted back into the peace of his head on Hannibal's chest.

"What is it, Will?" Hannibal asked after a while.

Damn, thought Will. He wondered about what he was going to say. That he wanted to be more than what they already were? Was he being too selfish? He had all that he could ask for. He placed his hand on Hannibal's and brought it to his lips, placing an innocent kiss on it. And then, devilishly, he slightly opened his mouth and dragged his lips over Hannibal's knuckles, to see if he would notice. Unintentionally, he felt himself harden against Hannibal's leg. When he lifted his head and looked up to check if Hannibal had indeed fallen asleep, he found that he was wrong. Hannibal was looking back with a mildly shocked expression on his face.

"Fuck," Will said, trying to spring away his body from Hannibal, but colliding with the back of the sofa. He felt a chill run through him. Had he calculated wrong? Was Hannibal actually just…straight? "I—I'm sorry," Will blurted out.

Hannibal pursed his lips and then sat up, until he was partially resting against the edge of the sofa. So, it was time to have a discussion. Will wanted to run away. “I’m really sorry, I should go—” Will said, but Hannibal grabbed him by the wrist.

“Stay, Will.” Hannibal said, pulling gently until Will was closer. Will kept his distance, sitting cross-legged. He stayed silent, waiting for Hannibal’s response, but Hannibal was doing the same. Perhaps giving him a chance to erase whatever had happened.

“What happened, Will?” Hannibal asked at last. “Just now.”

Will kept his eyes low, cheeks growing warm. He fidgeted with his fingers until Hannibal place a calming hand on them.

“Tell me,” Hannibal urged. At least he didn’t seem to be angry.

“I just—I…” Will trailed off. “I think you know,” he said, in a timid voice.

Hannibal nodded once, and then contemplated.

Will sighed and tried to explain: “When I’m with you…like this,” he gestured with his hand to the sofa, meaning their cuddling. “I feel like—you make me feel things…I want you, Hannibal. Like, more than…whatever it is that we are to each other,”

Hannibal looked back, his face neutral. Trying to appear professional.

“You keep me awake at night—you torment me,” Will confessed. “And—I’m almost certain you feel something too,”

Hannibal looked away, deep in thought. It was the first time that Will had seen Hannibal at a loss for words.

“Say something, Hannibal.” Will urged, moving closer and shaking Hannibal’s arm. “Or have I ruined us?”

Hannibal sighed and looked back at Will, his eyes a little misty. Will was surprised by that. “Will…” Hannibal replied, finally. “I cherish you deeply—more than anyone in this world.”

Will waited, as if for the inevitable rejection.

“You have tormented me too—day and night.” Hannibal smiled, painfully. “It’s been a great test at resistance for me,”

“So you admit it?” Will asked. “That you think about me that way?”

Hannibal nodded, slowly. “Yes.”

“But?” Will asked, his chest aching.

“You should take in the factor that I’m old enough to be your father,”

“Are you rejecting me, Hannibal?” Will scoffed, cruelly. “That doesn’t matter to me!”

“I’m afraid that looking at your…history, you’d only be repeating a pattern.”

“You’re saying I have daddy issues?”

Hannibal looked back with a painful expression on his face. He sighed. “I only wish the best for you.” he said.

“But you *are* the best for me!” Will almost shouted. “You saved my life!”

Hannibal stayed still. He looked a little shocked at the aggressive gratitude.

“Please,” Will pleaded, almost sure that it was useless. Then, he had an idea that was dangerously foolish. But such is the way of love. He moved forward towards Hannibal until he was straddling him.

“Will,” Hannibal protested, placing his hands on Will’s waist as if to lift him away. But Will had adrenaline rushing through his veins: he was unstoppable. He grounded himself and held Hannibal’s face with his hands firmly. Hannibal stopped trying to move Will away, as if spellbound by Will’s hands on his face. The message was clear: he was going to kiss Hannibal, to prove a point. That was the only way to show how much Will loved Hannibal. He leaned forward slowly, only closing his eyes at the last second, and pressed his lips tenderly on Hannibal’s. It was a chaste kiss at first, until Will pulled away and went in deeper. He could feel his breath coming faster. He could feel Hannibal’s hands tighten on his waist, his legs rising to draw Will closer. Will opened his mouth a little and felt Hannibal do the same, the wetness of their lips intoxicating. It was becoming too much. Will pulled away with a gasp.

He looked at Hannibal, who was almost panting.

“Why waste more words arguing?” Will asked. He could feel Hannibal’s growing erection under him.

Hannibal looked defeated, and victorious at the same time. He lifted a hand to Will’s face and ran a thumb over his lower lip. “Why indeed,” he whispered.

Will smiled and leaned back in, bringing their lips together. This time, he felt Hannibal mirroring his own hunger. As if the embers of a small fire had laid inside him, coming alive only by the rubbing of their lips.

As if completely out of control now, Hannibal broke their kiss and ravenously trailed kisses down Will’s face, stopping at his neck. “Hannibal, please—” Will pleaded, not knowing exactly what he was pleading for.

Hannibal paused. “What do you want to do?” he asked.

“I want you to take me to bed,” Will replied in a trembling voice. He looked straight at Hannibal, a tear threatening to spill onto his cheek.

Hannibal regarded Will for a second, a look of intense desire and fascination burning in his eyes. “Are you sure?” he asked.

“Yes, please.” pleaded Will, a tear escaping and pooling down to his chin. Just then, Hannibal leaned over and caught the tear with his mouth. Will closed his eyes and exhaled, suddenly feeling like the room was growing too hot. Hannibal pulled away, tasting the tear.

Before Will could do anything else, he found himself snatched up into Hannibal’s arms, still straddling him. He held onto Hannibal tightly as they ascended the stairs, and then finally Will found himself thrown onto Hannibal’s spacious bed.

Will propped himself up on his elbow as he watched Hannibal approach him. A sudden and unexpected panic shot through Will at the prospect at being pinned down while a strong man hovered over him.

“I don’t want to overwhelm you,” Hannibal said, sitting beside Will. He motioned for Will to sit on his lap instead, to take control. “I will only touch you where you allow me,”

Will, frozen for a second for the gratitude that washed over him, quickly moved and straddled Hannibal again. “Thank you,” he whispered, kissing Hannibal—a feeling so foreign that he suspected he would—anytime now—wake up from a dream. He pressed the flat of his palms against Hannibal’s chest, taking liberty. He had waited so long for this, and now he was allowed to do whatever he wanted. He stopped at Hannibal’s throat, running his fingers through the tie. “May I?” he asked.

“Of course,” Hannibal rubbed his hands along Will’s upper arms in encouragement. “Anything you like,”

Will blushed and undid the tie, working his hands slowly, shakily. Confidence was far away from him as much as it could be; but Hannibal’s encouragement was fuel to keep going when he hesitated. Hannibal moved with obedience as Will shrugged the shirt off of him, laying back against the headboard to display his naked chest to Will.

“Oh my god…” Will whispered, bringing his hands up again and into the hairs of Hannibal’s chest—so unlike his own body. His hands shook with excitement as he neared his face to where his hands had been. He brushed his lips against the skin, earning a sigh from Hannibal. Vaguely, he realised he had been sitting on Hannibal’s erection and had failed to give him any kind of relief. He pressed kisses onto Hannibal’s chest as he began to move his hips, to ease the ache that Hannibal was so obviously feeling. “Am I being too greedy?” Will asked, suddenly intoxicated by how much power he had over Hannibal. Hannibal’s hands were bunched up beside him into the sheets, faintly trembling.

“For you, Will, I will endure anything.” Hannibal said, his cheeks flushing. “I’m at your mercy,”

Will felt a thrill at the words, moving his fingers down until they collided with Hannibal’s waistband. Despite having all the permission he needed, his fingers stopped in hesitation.

“Go ahead, Will.” he heard Hannibal say. Will let his hand work the opening, until he could reach inside and lay his hand against the bulge of Hannibal’s erection. He felt himself grow harder when Hannibal inhaled sharply.

“Whatever that you intend to do—” Hannibal said, arching his head back, breathless. “Know that you can stop if it becomes too much.”

Will nodded, though he was only half-listening. He pulled down Hannibal’s pants and underwear in one-go, until they were bunched up around his knees.

“Oh my god,” Will said again, watching Hannibal exposed and writhing at his mercy. He moved and pulled off the trousers, until Hannibal was only in socks. The image was wildly erotic—him fully dressed while the mighty Dr. Lecter was naked and under his thumb. He brought his hand over Hannibal’s cock and circled his fingers around the head, marvelling at how wet the tip was. “I didn’t know I excited you this much,” teased Will.

Hannibal laughed. “You have no idea,” he managed to say.

“Lie back,” Will said. Hannibal did as he was told, hands flat on his side.

Will crawled back over Hannibal, until his face was hovering over Hannibal’s cock. He stuck his tongue out and ran it over the head. How strange, that the act had repulsed him once but not with Hannibal. He felt himself grow hungry as he opened his mouth wider and took it almost half-way in. Hannibal exhaled sharply above him. Will smiled, and then tried to go deeper, letting his saliva dribble all over the length. He resumed sucking until his jaw was almost aching—giving Hannibal no time to rest. He felt Hannibal sit up on his elbows as if to stop him. Will looked up. “What’s wrong?”

“Will, if you don’t stop…” Hannibal warned, flinching as Will resumed stroking him with his hand.

Will smirked. “I want you to come,”

“You won’t let me touch you?” Hannibal asked.

Will did want it, but somehow Hannibal’s orgasm seemed more important. “After you,” he promised. “I want to make you come first,”

Hannibal nodded, and slumped against the bed. His body was deliciously gleaming with a sheen of sweat that Will wanted to run his tongue over. For now, he focused on Hannibal’s cock instead. He opened wide and resumed, gaining momentum until he could hear Hannibal’s breathing accelerate—until he heard Hannibal gasp his name—and then Will watched as Hannibal came, the come landing on his hand and his face, some dripping onto Hannibal’s stomach. Will lifted his hand and began licking off the come, dragging what was on his face into his mouth, and then lapping up the drops which had landed on Hannibal. He could feel his own erection leaking and sensitive against his underwear. He reached down and rubbed over his pants at it for some relief. Hannibal was looking at him, looking at what he was doing. “May I?” Hannibal asked.

Will hesitated. “I don’t want to take my clothes off just yet…but I want you to touch me,” Will offered. “I don’t know how I’m gonna react to anything more than that,”

“Of course,” Hannibal said. “How do you want to?” he asked, offering Will to choose how they would position themselves.

Will moved his body onto Hannibal’s, until they were chest to chest. He lifted his hips a little for Hannibal to gain access. “Like this,” Will whispered. “Can you kiss me when I come?”

Hannibal nodded eagerly, spitting on his palm for lubrication. It was obscene. It turned Will on endlessly.

Will gasped as Hannibal’s slick hand closed around his cock. He felt like he could come with that contact alone. Hannibal hummed sweetly in satisfaction as Will began moving his hips into Hannibal’s palm. Fucking his hand.

“My beautiful Will,” Hannibal whispered.

It felt like Will was losing control, his hands fisted tightly in the sheets; his mouth against Hannibal’s neck, where he could feel the throb of his pulse. He squeezed his eyes shut, breath becoming hitched.

“Hannibal, may I come?” gasped Will.

Hannibal looked surprised. “You need not ask permission, Will,” he replied. “Show me.” Hannibal pressed his mouth on Will’s, tightened his hand and had barely moved it when Will cried out and came, his body writhing. When the final jolts had ended, he slumped flat over Hannibal’s body in bliss.

“Thank you,” whispered Hannibal, against Will’s ear.

*

And of course Will wanted more than that. Hannibal deserved more, he concluded, even if Will wasn’t ready yet. He convinced Hannibal of it; prepared himself ahead of time.

He sat down on the edge of Hannibal’s bed as he watched Hannibal undress, peeling away the many layers of his suit.

“You’re already hard,” Will remarked, smirking.

Hannibal tilted his head as if he hadn’t noticed. “Just looking at you makes me hard, Will. You know that,”

Will smiled, his expression changing into that of lust as he looked down at Hannibal’s cock. He licked his lips, reaching out a hand for Hannibal to approach. “Just one taste,” he pleaded, taking hold of the erection, then running his tongue on it. He sucked at it slowly, torturously, until Hannibal had to push him away. “If you keep that up I’m afraid I’ll lose my patience, dear,” he said.

Will let Hannibal undress him. It hadn't been much of a trigger as he had thought it would be. After all, he had been completely naked in front of Hannibal before, and Hannibal had only acted appropriately.

Once naked, he let Hannibal have his way—as Hannibal had let him have his way just now. Hannibal was more animalistic before a sex act—he licked and kissed as much as possible, as if taking his fill of Will, *feeding* on him. Will was left tingling all over, buzzing with the high of being wanted like this.

Will's breath was growing heavy as Hannibal trailed kisses on the scars of his thighs, and then threw his head back as Hannibal grasped his hips on both sides, moved his face up and pressed it into Will's groin. Hannibal inhaled loudly and groaned, his cock twitching. "I could never tire of your scent here," Hannibal said, his voice muffled.

Will laughed nervously; he jolted when Hannibal closed his mouth around Will's cock, taking hold of it at the same time, slathering it with his saliva. And then Hannibal grabbed the back of his knees and pushed them up, wasting no time. He plunged his tongue against Will's hole. Will gasped—of course, he had expected this to happen—he had asked Hannibal to penetrate him, after all. But he had also expected some sort of warning.

But as much as a shock that it was, the thought of Hannibal doing this to Will was arousing. "Yes," he heard himself say. It felt like he could hardly wait to feel Hannibal inside him. He heard a lustful growling sound from Hannibal as he pushed a wet finger inside of Will. "Fuck —" Will gasped.

Hannibal looked up and smirked. He seemed like he was enjoying this thoroughly.

There wasn't anything pleasurable yet in the act—but what Will could hold onto was the image of Hannibal. And what was promised at the end when he would be thoroughly prepared to received Hannibal. It didn't matter if it brought him pleasure. All he wanted was the feel of Hannibal inside him, against him. Closer than close could be.

As soon as he could endure three fingers, Will couldn't bear it any longer. "I'm ready," he said.

"Are you sure?" Hannibal asked. His hair was damp, which darkened the colour in a way that threw Will off completely. Will curled his toes as he felt a jolt of renewed lust course throw his body.

"Yes," Will replied, sitting up.

Hannibal nodded.

Before even thinking about it, Will turned himself around on his stomach, slowly rising to all-fours. It was somewhat of a shameful pose, when he thought about himself in such a compromising position; so bare, with nothing to hide himself behind. But he would do anything for Hannibal, now. Anything.

"Will?" called Hannibal.

“Yeah?” Will replied, looking back. Hannibal had lifted a hand and was rubbing his back in circles. The touch felt very loving.

“Come here, I want to see your face.” Hannibal said.

Will reddened and dropped himself onto his back. He watched as Hannibal smiled and loomed over him. “It’s our first time—I wouldn’t waste it by not looking at your beautiful face,”

Will smiled in embarrassment. “I’m not beautiful,” he replied.

“But you are,” Hannibal said, as Will spread his legs and wrapper them around Hannibal’s waist. Will moaned as he felt Hannibal’s wet cock poke him.

“The most beautiful boy ever,” Hannibal said, dipping into Will’s neck for kisses.

Will caught his breath, pulling Hannibal even closer. He was aching so hard that he began rubbing himself against Hannibal. “Stop teasing and just fuck me already.” he said.

“Such crass words,” Hannibal chuckled. “I wonder what’s to be done about that,”

“You know you love it.” retorted Will, impatiently.

“How could I not,” said Hannibal, kneeling and taking hold of Will’s knees, pushing them wider apart.

Will gasped as he felt Hannibal’s fingers enter him again. “It’s been long,” he reasoned, suddenly unsure of whether he could really take it all of Hannibal inside him,

“Tell me to stop and I’ll stop.” Hannibal said.

Will nodded, but was determined to go through with it.

Hannibal was slow, and considerate. He continued with his fingers until Will seemed comfortable enough. Will moaned as he felt three fingers go in. He slid his hand down and began touching himself.

“Naughty boy,” said Hannibal. “I wonder what else you can take,”

Will moaned at the words. “Please, give it to me,” he pleaded.

But Hannibal wasn’t so merciful as he was in other ways. He kept his fingers in, twisted them, and watched fascinated as Will’s knees began to shake.

“Give what to you, Will?” Hannibal teased, eyes glittering with amusement.

Will slung an arm over his face to hide it. “You’re really gonna make me say it?”

“Of course I am.” cooed Hannibal. “We must communicate efficiently.” He reached up to take Will’s arm away. “Tell me what you want.”

Will flushed and gave in. “Give me your cock.” he slurred, risking a look at Hannibal’s cock, which seemed to be ready and throbbing. “Please,” he said.

Hannibal smiled at the words and swiftly hovered over Will, guiding his cock into Will without any consideration—which was what Will had wanted. Will gasped, clenching his eyes shut at the sudden intrusion. “Yes,” he breathed out. It hurt, but that was part of his pleasure.

“Open you eyes, Will.” said Hannibal. “I want you to look at me,”

Will did as he was told. He placed his hands flat against Hannibal’s chest. “You feel so good, Will.” Hannibal said, thrusting.

“Please, slowly,” Will heard himself whimper, surprisingly feeling tears in his eyes. He blinked rapidly to make them go away. Hannibal stopped his movement, then slowly pulled out.

“Why—” Will lifted his head. For a sick second, he thought that Hannibal had suddenly and finally lost interest in him. But then he saw Hannibal’s face clouded in worry.

“You’re crying, Will.” Hannibal reasoned, moving nearer and cradling Will’s face in his hands.

“I’m fine…” Will muttered. He was beginning to worry that he was never going to satisfy Hannibal, what with all his problems.

“What happened there? Tell me.” Hannibal said.

Will sat up and drew his knees to his chest. He considered lying, but Hannibal had been right: they needed to communicate. “I just…got an image of…him in my head when he…” Will gulped. “when he was really rough with me…how helpless I was.”

“Oh, Will.” replied Hannibal. “I’m glad you told me.” He shifted closer and laid a kiss onto Will’s forehead. “Perhaps it’s too soon for this.”

Will dropped his face. “Sorry for ruining this for you…”

“You haven’t,” replied Hannibal, smiling. “What would make you feel better?”

Will thought for a moment. “Just…hold me,” he said. “Hold me and kiss me.”

Without wasting another second, Hannibal wrapped his arms around Will and pulled him close.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will had been thinking about it, obsessively. And then he tumbled upon the answer when he thought about the first time that they had touched each other. The trick was to have Hannibal under him. The trick was to pretend to be the one in control.

He did what he could alone—prepared himself, stretched himself with his own fingers, and then approached Hannibal with the proposal. “I’d like to try something…” Will said, weirdly confident in spite of what had happened last time.

Hannibal waited patiently. He had that dreamy look in his eyes that Will knew was when Hannibal was trying to memorise his features; and at the same time admiring him. “Yes?”

“Do you wanna fuck?” Will asked.

Hannibal blinked rapidly. It was a rare sight to see him baffled. “Will, dear.” he said, chuckling, raising a hand to place it under his chin. “There are better ways to communicate,”

“But do you want to?” Will was becoming impatient. What if Hannibal said, *Not now?*

“Of course I do, but—”

“Then come on,” Will said, turning on his heel and running to the bedroom.

Will stripped down rapidly and waited; when Hannibal finally arrived, he stood and leaned against the doorframe, a soft smile on his lips. “I could never entirely predict you, Will.” he said.

“Come here,” Will urged.

Hannibal finally gave in and stood before Will, basking in his naked beauty. “I would’ve preferred to undress you myself,”

“Well, too bad,” Will said, eagerly undoing all the layers of Hannibal’s attire. Hannibal helped, simultaneously trying to steal kisses in between. Will laughed, in spite of himself. He almost forgot what he was doing when Hannibal’s lips closed over an earlobe. “Hannibal—wait,” he urged, pushing him away. Hannibal smirked, allowing Will to take his pants off.

“Sit down,” Will instructed, bending down and presenting a pocket square from under the pillow. “Hope you don’t mind.”

Hannibal tilted his head, trying to work out Will’s proposal. After a second, he raised both hands and presented them to Will in complete surrender. “Clever boy,” he commented.

Will smirked and tied the silk fabric around Hannibal’s wrists. “Is that okay?”

“It’s perfect,” Hannibal said. “But wouldn’t it be more helpful if you tie them behind my back?”

“I know you’re not gonna try to wriggle out of it,” Will replied. He knew that there was no danger of Hannibal overpowering him. What was important was the illusion of Hannibal not being able to. “I trust you,”

Hannibal’s rich brown eyes were glittering. Will could see that he was already hard. He leaned down and locked their lips together, until both of them swayed and fell onto the bed, with Hannibal on his back. He guided Hannibal against the headboard, hand clasped around Hannibal’s cock. “I used to fantasise a lot about sucking you,” Will said. Hannibal groaned as Will tightened his hold.

“And now I’m yours to do as you please,” Hannibal said in a breathy voice.

Will felt an excitement run through him. He bent down and ran his tongue wet against the tip of Hannibal’s cock, and then brought his mouth tight around it. It was almost a sort of punishment to Hannibal; unbearable because it felt so good. Immediately, he felt Hannibal’s mood shift; become more incohesive. Love-sick.

Will himself felt the sparks of desire fire in himself. “I can’t wait anymore,” he said, dribbling lube onto Hannibal’s cock, preparing for what he had been wanting to do. Hannibal watched, as Will lifted his legs and straddled him. He watched Will closely as Will lowered himself onto Hannibal’s cock, face strained in a mixture of pain and pleasure. “Oh fuck,” Will gasped.

“Language, Will.” Hannibal remarked, though he seemed beyond caring. He threw his head back when Will lowered himself completely.

Will began moving, setting his own pace. He stayed still until the stretch didn’t feel uncomfortable anymore, and then began again.

“Are you alright?” Hannibal asked.

“Shhh,” Will said, playfully clasping a hand over Hannibal’s mouth. “Let me have my fun, Dr. Lecter.”

Hannibal muffled a laugh under Will’s hand. It was hard to not start thrusting.

“Holy fuck,” Will said. He ran his hands through Hannibal’s chest; buried his face into Hannibal’s neck. Then he grasped his own cock and began touching himself. But then he had a better idea. He reached for the bottle of lube and drenched Hannibal’s hands in it. He curled Hannibal’s hands and slipped his cock from under.

“Very resourceful, Will.” Hannibal commented, delighted.

Will thrusted himself on Hannibal’s cock, while he also thrusted himself into Hannibal’s hand.

Soon it was too much to bear, for the both of them. “Fuck—I’m gonna come,” Will gasped, looking down at Hannibal, who was also close. “Come inside me, Hannibal,” he said.

Hannibal thrusted hard—once, twice. And then it was over, for the both of them.

Will collapsed forward onto Hannibal, blissful and breathless.

After a while, he looked up to Hannibal, who was watching him affectionately. Will looked down at Hannibal’s chest, drenched in his come. He stooped down and collected it between his lips, transferring into Hannibal’s waiting tongue.

“More,” Hannibal said, eyes glazed with lust.

Will scooped up the remaining come and did it again. Then, he looked down and was astonished to find that Hannibal was hard, again. “Look at you,” Will teased. “Hard again,”

Hannibal squirmed in embarrassment.

“Wanna fuck my ass again?” Will asked, tilting his head; trying to appear seductive.

“Yes, please.” Hannibal moaned impatiently.

This time, Will allowed Hannibal to be the one in control, though he was still straddling him. It was over in minutes, it seemed. Towards the end Hannibal’s thrusts became frantic. “Fill me up, Dr. Lecter,” Will pleaded. Hannibal came with a silent cry.

*

After, Will stared at the ceiling as they recuperated from exhaustion. He was getting ahead of himself, but he could safely say that he felt happy. He imagined sharing more times like these with Hannibal, and never tiring of them. Beside Will, he felt Hannibal turn on his side and support his head propped up on an elbow, watching him, as if for signs of distress, or regret. He felt Hannibal’s hand reach out and rest on his heart, rising with each breath he took. Will turned his head to look back at Hannibal and smiled, to let him know that this was all that he could ask for. But instead he leaned forward for a kiss; at the same time feeling Hannibal do the same.

When they drew apart, Will was sure: he unquestionably in love.

“Bath, my love?” Hannibal asked, brushing his knuckles against Will’s jaw.

Will smiled, nodded. So this was what it felt like to be cared for. To be loved.

*

Will was on his stomach, arms folded underneath his head. Recently, he had made a new—and astonishing—discovery: that he could associate the aftermath of sex with relief. It was peaceful, to be beside Hannibal, gazing at his beauty. Hannibal was on his back, eyes on the ceiling but knowing that he was being watched. They stayed silent, catching their breath.

“What if I told you…that I wanted to join the FBI?” said Will, breaking the silence.

A smile graced Hannibal’s face. “How could I ever predict you,” came the answer.

Will waited patiently, turning to lay on his side, placing a hand on Hannibal’s chest.

“Of course, you have my full support, Will.” Hannibal placed his hand on Will’s and gave it a kiss.

“It will be beneficial for us too.” Will said. “Among other reasons.”

“Indeed,” replied Hannibal, smiling. “You’ve been thinking about this,”

Will nodded, smirking.

“What a cunning boy you are,” Hannibal remarked. He turned his head to Will and kissed him tenderly at first, and then hungrily.

Chapter End Notes

Alas Fannibals the time has come to end this fic.
Thank you for your patience and thanks for reading! XO

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